THE MINUTE BOYS OF PHILADELPHIA

JAMES OTIS

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THE MINUTE BOYS OF PHILADELPHIA

"WHICH WAY DID HE GO?"

THE MINUTE BOYS OF PHILADELPHIA

BY

JAMES OTIS Kaler

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THE MINUTE BOYS OF PHILADELPHIA

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THE MINUTE BOYS OF PHILADELPHIA

CHAPTER I

THE SPY

In striving to set down what we boys of Philadelphia did during a portion of the time when General Howe and his lobster-backs held possession of our city, I have no intention of blowing my own horn.

If, however, it should appear from what I write that I have made myself seemingly of more consequence than is my due, it must be set down as excuse that I am earnestly endeavoring to give a true, faithful account of our work, for some of us lads of Philadelphia did, so we have been told by those who stand high in the American army, very much good for the patriot cause in our own small way.

It is needless for me to go into details regarding General Howe's occupation of the city, for the facts are well known. I question if there be a boy in all these colonies who does not remember how we of Philadelphia suffered when the lobster-backs held possession of the city.

It is written in history by this time, that we who

held to the Cause were sadly put upon by those whom the king sent overseas to whip us into subjection. It may be there are some outside this city of Philadelphia who think we might have done more in our own defence; but I dare venture to say you will agree with me, if it so please you to believe all I have written, when I say that we, meaning men, women and children, did whatsoever we could for the Cause at such times as it was possible to do so without endangering our lives.

In more cases than one have I seen even the women render aid which would have cost them the halter, if so be General Howe, or General Clinton who came later, had had an idea of what was going on.

Do you remember the battle of Germantown, as some people call it, that fight which took place near the Chew house? Well, it was about six months afterward, when the spring had fully come, that Jeremy Hapgood, my particular friend, and I, who am by name known as Richard Salter, had agreed among ourselves that we would attend a vendue of horses to be held at the London Coffee-House, which is situate on the corner of High and Front streets, as of course you know.

To our minds, the only important matter concerning this vendue was that there were several fine animals to be sold, and among them mayhap four or five which the British officers had seized from our people nearabout Germantown, claiming a right to take them in the name of the king because their owners were said to favor the Cause.

We lads were not the only persons in Philadelphia with a leaning towards independence, who counted to be at the vendue that day, for I had

heard it whispered about by Master Norris, who, as you know, is a most peaceable man, being a Friend, that there was a chance some attempt might be made during the sale to carry off the horses which had been much the same as stolen.

Jeremy and I were minded to know what would be done, hoping there might be some chance for us to lend a hand, and realizing that it would be a credit to us if we could say we had had some part in cutting the combs, however slightly, of these lobster-backs who paraded the streets shouldering into the gutters all of our people who dared hold the sidewalk when their high mightinesses were inclined to use it.

Now, as you know, the London Coffee-House was a famous resort for those minions of the king, and we lads generally gave that part of the city a wide berth, not being minded to bear insult, nay, even blows, when it so pleased the lobster-backs to inflict them.

To the end that we might see what was going on and at the same time remain at a respectful distance from the red-coated gentry, I proposed to Jeremy that we meet in front of that shop at the corner of Front street and Black Horse alley which was formerly Mrs. Roberts' coffee-house, and there we would not only be at a safe distance from the Britishers who were likely to be in a disagreeable mood from overly much drinking; but, in addition could, if need arose, readily make our escape.

You must know that at the rear of the store was a gate opening on Chestnut street, where, when the place had been used as a coffee-house, the gentlemen's horses were brought in to the stable, and through that gate we might readily give any lob-

ster-back the slip unless, peradventure, he was fleeter of foot than we; but there were few in Philadelphia at that time who could outstrip either Jeremy or me in a race.

Well, as we had agreed so we did, and on coming in front of the shop we could see on the corner of High street a large throng gathered, nearly every one of whom, save, of course, the grooms, wore a red coat, and I said to Jeremy that it was in my mind Master Norris had repented of taking any part in the rescue of the horses, after learning that so many of the soldiers were gathered.

As a matter of fact, it would have been a mighty disagreeable task to run off any of the animals while such a crowd of officers was nearby, with here and there a squad of soldiers who had gathered by themselves, not daring to approach too near to their high and mighty masters.

"If Isaac Norris and his friends had any design to run off the beasts, then the work should have been done last night while they were stabled, rather than wait until now, for even the thickest head in Philadelphia could understand that with so many fine horses offered for sale, the king's army would be well represented at this vendue," Jeremy Hapgood said grimly, half turning as if it was in his mind to beat a retreat, for it would profit us little to remain so far from the vendue, if peradventure we were eager to hear and to see all that was going on.

The animals had not yet been brought out for sale, and it appeared to me that the waiting ones were impatient, so much so, in fact, that there was seemingly considerable excitement nearby the entrance to the coffee-house, although what had caused

it I could not even so much as guess, and it was on my tongue's end to propose to Jeremy that we go down to the water front nearby the Jolly Tar inn, where we had for some time kept concealed a skiff.

Now it may sound much as if I am straining the truth when I say that we two lads had kept hidden from the Britishers all this while a boat, for, as you well know, it was near akin to a crime for one of us so-called rebels of Philadelphia to have a craft of any kind in his possession.

Every boat and vessel on the river had either been destroyed or taken in charge by the lobster-backs, as if they were fearful that some of us enemies to the king might try to get away from their not overly pleasant company by taking to the water, and that their hold of Philadelphia would be weakened if man, woman or child was permitted to leave the city.

As I have said, it was on the tip of my tongue to tell Jeremy that we were but wasting our time here while we could be more pleasantly employed elsewhere, when there arose a sudden commotion nearby the door of the coffee-house, and in a twinkling I saw three of the red-coated, swaggering officers fall to the ground as if suddenly stricken with death.

Almost at the same instant from out amid the throng there appeared a man dressed in the garb of a countryman, who, from outward appearance, might have been one of the farmers nearby, and who, thinking more of the dollars than of his country's freedom, was ready to serve the Britishers with meat and vegetables, if so be he received therefor sufficient of hard money.

This fellow came out with a bound, and he it

was who had overturned the lobster-backs. Almost before I could fairly understand what had happened, he was coming in the direction of Jeremy and me at full speed, while behind him rose such cries as:

"Kill him! A spy, a spy! Take after him, you idlers; don't you see that he is a spy and escaping?"

Jeremy and I needed no further introduction to this fleeing stranger. The fact that the Britishers were bent on capturing him, and accused him of being a spy, which was much the same as declaring he was one who had devoted himself to the Cause, was enough to make him our friend, and in a twinkling, fortunately, I had my wits about me sufficiently to realize that we could open up to him a way of escape, if so be the lobster-backs did not press too closely on his heels.

I knew full well that if I was seen to give aid to one suspected of being a spy, my shrift would be short indeed, for General Howe's officers made quick work of us people of Philadelphia who were suspected of having lost our love for the king. Therefore it was that I ran forward as if to seize the man, and did lay hold of him with one hand, striving as if it was my purpose to detain him, while at the same time I said loudly, realizing that the uproar behind us was so great that the words would not be overheard:

"Get into the alley-way this side the shop! There is a gate leading to Chestnut street, if so be you are minded to go through; but you should be able to find a hiding place in the old stables, while Jeremy and I keep on as if in pursuit, making them think you have passed that way."

Then it was I threw myself to the ground, as if

he who was shouted after as a spy had thrown me off roughly; but was able to scramble to my feet before the foremost of the pursuers came up.

It was well I moved quickly, otherwise Jeremy might have brought us all to grief, for he failed utterly of understanding why it was I would do anything to aid in the capture of the man. He looked at me in open-mouthed astonishment with reproach written on every feature of his face, until, seizing him by the coat-sleeve, I dragged him on with me as I shouted at the full strength of my lungs:

"A spy, a spy! Come all you good people and catch the spy!"

"What is the meaning of this?" Jeremy asked angrily. "How does it chance that you are joining with the lobster-backs in chasing down one of our people?"

"Have your wits about you, Jeremy Hapgood, else are you like to get me into serious trouble!" I whispered angrily. "Follow my example, and it may be that peradventure we can help this unhappy man who is risking his life for the Cause."

Then, literally dragging Jeremy along with me, I continued on as if in pursuit of the spy, darting close at his heels up the narrow passage leading to the ruined stables, and from there to the gate which let on Chestnut street.

To my satisfaction, I saw him make a plunge among the decaying timbers much as does one who, swimming, dives into deeper water, and without slackening pace I threw open the gate leading on to Chestnut street, where I made as if I had hurt my leg; but all the while continuing to cry:

"A spy, a spy! Catch the spy!"

"What has come upon you?" Jeremy asked sharply. "I fail to understand any portion of this game."

"It makes little difference whether you understand it or not, Jeremy Hapgood," I replied sharply. "Your part is to follow my example, if peradventure you are so thick-headed as not to be able to look through a ladder. You know as well as I, that the man went out of here, and I would have caught him but for the fact that he kicked me on the knee."

Then it was that Jeremy began to have an inkling of how I would help the poor fellow who was so sorely pressed, and a smile of satisfaction came over his face which would have been fatal to my plans if the lobster-backs had come up in sufficient time to see it.

It was necessary the foremost of the pursuers should run a full half-square before they could come to where we were standing, and no less than a minute passed from the time I threw open the gate before the leaders came up, shouting wildly:

"Which way did he go? Why have you halted in the chase? Where is he?"

"He passed out through this gate not many seconds ago, disabling me by a kick as he went, else I would have caught the fellow," was my reply.

Now, as a matter of course, all this was a lie, and strictly speaking, so my mother would say, no lad has a right to tell that which is false. But I have heard Master Norris, who is as straight a Friend as can be found in Philadelphia, and a most truthful man, say that in these troublous times he believes we are warranted in telling the enemies

of our country things which are not true, if so be good can come to the Cause thereby.

Surely in this falsehood of mine good must come to the Cause, if peradventure the man whom I knew to be hiding under the timbers of the stable, was indeed a spy who had come down from Valley Forge, mayhap, with the hope of finding such a condition of affairs as would warrant our people in making an attempt to retake Philadelphia.

Now, as a matter of course, we lads knew nothing whatsoever of military matters, and wondered greatly why it was all our people should suffer as they had been suffering at Valley Forge, without making some attempt to relieve us who were shut up by the lobster-backs much the same as prisoners.

It seemed to me that if I were a soldier I would prefer to fight, no matter how great the odds might be against me, than remain idle, half-starved, half-frozen, half-clad, awaiting a favorable opportunity.

However, as I have said, and as you know full well, my knowledge of military matters was slight, and in my foolishness, on hearing that a spy had been discovered in the coffee-house, I believed he could have been sent for no less a purpose than to learn what he might to aid our people in making ready for an attack. And as I stood there by the gate, with the lobster-backs streaming past me, each asking querulously which way the game had gone, I could almost fancy I saw those patriots from Valley Forge coming down through Germantown to square accounts.

It goes without saying that the Britishers did not continue the chase very far up Chestnut street,

because of not being able to see the man they were so eager to catch, and after running a dozen yards, mayhap, one by one they turned back to question Jeremy and me as to the direction which the fugitive had taken.

I thought of what Master Norris had said regarding truth-telling when it came to a question of saving a man's life, and to the best of my ability I explained how I had seen the man run up the street after passing through the gate, and then, as my attention was attracted for an instant to Jeremy, I turned my head to look again; but saw nothing of him.

Therefore it was, so I said, that he must have taken refuge in some one of the houses or outbuildings between where we stood and, mayhap, the distance of a square.

By this time Jeremy had succeeded in getting through his head, which it seemed to me had never been so thick as on this day, somewhat of the plan in my mind, and bravely did he second my efforts to throw the lobster-backs off the track.

He also declared that he had seen the stranger running up the street; had followed him a certain distance, and declared that but for the blow which the fellow gave me, we two lads would have secured him. In other ways Master Hapgood bolstered up his story and mine in such fashion, that unless there had been serious cause for suspicion, the Britishers could have done no less than believe all we told them.

The result was that very speedily we were left alone, for not above twenty had followed the man through the alleyway, and many of these had gone back to the coffee-house to explain how the

supposed spy had succeeded in giving them the slip.

Within five minutes we were alone, standing in the gateway where we could see all that might take place on Chestnut street in either direction, as well as make certain whether anyone came upon us from the rear.

Thus we were, as you might say, absolutely alone, and Jeremy said to me in a whisper:

"Now what is your intent, Richard Salter? It strikes me that this is your affair, and I am well content to do whatsoever you shall say."

I knew not what reply to make, and verily an older head than mine might have been puzzled to decide exactly what was best to be done, for there was need of much caution since a man's life depended upon the decision that should be made.

I had succeeded in saving the stranger, whoever he might be, for the time being, and now it stood me in hand to do whatsoever I might toward finishing the job in proper fashion. But how the matter was to be worked puzzled me beyond words to describe.

Jeremy waited while one might have counted twenty, for me to reply to his question, and then repeated it in a different form:

"You have got your spy underneath the timbers of the stable, and within a stone's throw of where the king's officers most do congregate. Now, how are you to prevent the poor fellow from starving to death?"

"It is a question which I wish most heartily I might be able to answer, Jeremy," I replied soberly, cudgeling my brains meanwhile for some solution to the difficulty.

However, there was in my mind the fact that I could not make any move at once, because of the danger that the lobster-backs who had gone up Chestnut street might come back into the yard, therefore I said to the lad, linking my arm in his:

"There is nothing which can be done yet awhile; we must loiter around until night has come, and if so be the man who is in hiding has as much sense and quick wit as a spy needs, then will he understand that we are forced to wait until the hue and cry has died away before we can venture a hand to save him."

Well, Jeremy had no reply to make to this, and for the very good reason that there was nothing he could say.

He knew as well as I, that for us to approach the hiding place of the stranger now, while the lobster-backs were so near at hand and so likely to come into the yard, would be much the same as delivering the fellow over to death, therefore he followed my lead, and we two walked as slowly away as if there was nothing whatsoever on our minds save a desire for pleasure, toward the Jolly Tar inn, where there was good reason to believe we might meet with some of our comrades.

It can well be supposed that we discussed this sudden change in our affairs most earnestly as we walked along; but without arriving at any very satisfactory conclusion. We had most-like saved the life of a man that day, and the question which would come into our minds, despite all efforts to banish it, was whether or no we might succeed yet further in the purpose, or if that which we had done was only to keep him on this earth a few hours longer.

Certain it was, once the Britishers suspected him of being a spy, he would suffer the death of one in event of being captured, for the lobster-backs were not overly careful about spilling the blood of Americans.

Now you must know that our boat lay hidden on the bank of Dock creek, under a pile of lumber and general building material, where, save strictest search was made, she would be undiscovered by the enemy.

It is not to be supposed that at this time we boys had very much opportunity to indulge in boating. The British ships lay so thickly at anchor in the river off the town that, as Jeremy said, one might not safely pass a knife-blade between them, and unless we were minded to go up stream, where was every chance of being overhauled by one of the guard-boats at the expense of losing our craft, we were forced to content ourselves with looking at her now and then, thinking with a deal of satisfaction that we had succeeded thus far in holding that which his high mightiness, General Howe, insisted we of Philadelphia should not be allowed to keep in our possession.

The *Jolly Rover* was the name of our boat, and she was not very much to look upon with pleasure, being nothing more than a skiff, as you might say, with the forward part decked in, so that we might venture down toward the Capes even in stormy weather, without risk of being swamped.

However, to us she was as valuable, and, perhaps, as seemly looking as any of his majesty's vessels, and it appeared to me that after having crawled beneath the lumber to get at her, knowing the lobster-backs were supposed to keep a strict

guard nearby, I could better think out any problem which presented itself to my mind, because of being, so to speak, under my own vine and fig tree.

Therefore it was that I led Jeremy down toward Dock creek, turning over and over again in my mind, as you may well suppose, the chances for and against our being able to aid that stranger who, if he acted the truth, and I doubted it not, was laboring for the American Cause and now had none on this earth to trust in save us.

It seemed like the rarest stroke of good fortune that we should chance to come upon young Chris, meaning Chris Ludwig, son of Christopher Ludwig, the baker, who was our especial crony, and also an equal owner in the *Jolly Rover*.

Young Chris was loitering around Front street near about the creek, having nothing especial to do, for if there was one thing in this world that he was unfriendly with it was work, and although his father stood ready at all times, almost too ready, the lad said, to give him employment, he did his best to evade it. On this day verily I blessed his indolence, for, with the exception of Jeremy, he was the one person in Philadelphia to whom I could open my heart without fear of being betrayed.

One might suppose that a sensible lad would go at once to his father with such information as was in my possession — dangerous information;— but I had none to whom I could appeal. My father had long since been dead; my mother was a widow who, with what little aid I could give her by earning a shilling or a sixpence now and then, eked out a livelihood letting rooms in the house where I was born, therefore this taking possession of the city by General Howe was not unwelcome to her in

one sense, although she was as good a "rebel" as could be found in all our colony of Pennsylvania.

British officers were inclined to spend the king's gold whenever there was an opportunity of ministering to their pleasure, and many of them hired apartments in the city rather than be quartered wheresoever their billets led them. Thus it was that we had in my home three lobster-backs, all officers of the Royal Irish regiment, and you can guess that I heard every day of my life such threats or suggestions against us of Philadelphia as made my blood boil, although I dared not speak a word in protest, else had I gone to the stone jail, or to join the prisoners in the state-house, without delay.

As a matter of course, young Chris was eager to know where we had been and what was our purpose at present; but although there were none in the streets nearby who might overhear my words, I refused to make any explanation whatsoever until we were in our snug hiding-place beneath the lumber pile, and so told him, speaking in such a tone that on the instant he understood something of great import must be in the wind.

It required no less than half an hour of skilful manœuvring for us to get on board the *Jolly Rover*, safely hidden beneath the overhanging timbers, for we were forced to go one at a time lest, otherwise, undue attention be attracted to our movements.

But finally we were on board the craft, and then it was, sparing not words so that the lad might have full knowledge of all which had occurred during the morning, I told young Chris of our situation as it concerned the stranger.

One might have thought the lad would have been overwhelmed with fear at the bare idea of har-

boring a spy, for in our city of Philadelphia in the year of grace 1778, to do so was such a crime as the lobster-backs would never overlook until one had danced at the end of a rope so long as life remained in his body.

But Chris was not of that stamp. Instead of showing fear, it pleased him seemingly to a great extent that we had been able to do even so much as hide the spy, and straightway, without thinking of the danger, he began speculating as to how we might aid the stranger.

"I am ready to take the chances of setting off with him in this boat during the night, going so far up the river that he may be able to get on shore without being observed, for, of course, it is impossible we could make our way below the city past all the ships-of-war on which strict watch is kept."

"It strikes me that we should first learn where the man comes from," Jeremy interrupted. "Certain it is he ventured into this city on important business, otherwise he never would have risked his neck so rashly, and it is for us to learn how his work may be furthered, rather than say we will do this or do that because it best suits our convenience."

"Very well," young Chris said quickly. "What is to prevent us from knowing exactly how he would have us lend him a hand?"

"In order to do that, we must have speech with him," I replied quickly, "and, moreover, there is a possibility the man stands in need of food."

Young Chris made a gesture with his hand as if to say I was talking at random, and cried incautiously loud:

"What is to prevent your having speech with the man, and that right speedily? As soon as night has come I will take my station at Black Horse alley to give warning if any of the lobster-backs approach that way. Jeremy shall stand guard at the gate on Chestnut street, and then you, Richard Salter, may go in and talk to the man to your heart's content, so that you do not give the lobster-backs an inkling of your purpose before having entered the shop yard."

Strange as it may seem, this simple plan had not occurred to me; I had fancied it would cost us a deal of trouble and could be done only at the expense of much danger, yet the moment young Chris had spoken I understood how simple it would all be, providing the lobster-backs were not loitering in the neighborhood, suspecting the man might be hidden nearby.

However, I was not minded that the lad should believe he had contrived something which had escaped my attention, and therefore said, much as if it had been my purpose all the while to do this same thing:

"Of course, that is what must be done. The question in my mind, however, is whether the man still remains where we last saw him."

"How could he go elsewhere?" young Chris asked sharply. "He has no means of knowing but that the Britishers are close about waiting for him to come out, and because you gave him the hint where a hiding place might be found, he will depend upon you to aid him farther, unless he be a veritable simple."

Well, we discussed the matter, each in turn suggesting the most improbable methods of getting the

stranger out of the city, and arriving at no satisfactory conclusion. It seemed well nigh impossible we might thus pluck a spy from out the clutches of the Britishers without bringing ourselves to the gallows.

You must understand that in this year of grace 1778, we of Philadelphia were lying, as one might say, bound hand and foot at the mercy of those whom the king had sent to whip us into subjection; and at the first move man, woman, or child might make toward doing anything in aid of their distressed country, then was punishment severe and terrible to think upon, sure to follow.

Of course, we could do nothing toward aiding the spy until night had come, and so excited were we all that there was no thought in the minds of any that we might be needing food; but it seemed almost as if the safety of the man depended entirely on our remaining aboard the *Jolly Rover,* hidden from view, until the favorable moment when we might take steps in his behalf.

I knew full well my mother would be anxious regarding me if I failed to return home at the accustomed time, and yet it seemed that I must stay there, if indeed I gave much of any heed to such fact. I was so puffed up with the idea that it might be possible for me to do something which would give me an enviable name among those who were serving the colonies, that it was as if I had no home nor anyone who would be concerned whether I came or remained away.

Young Chris had no desire to go back to the bakery even for a few moments, because he knew full well that his father would find some task for him to do, therefore was he content to remain

with me. Jeremy Hapgood, however, had better sense than either of us, for he understood he ought to report himself at home at least once during the day, and, finding that we were not disposed to come out from our hiding place until it was sufficiently dark to carry into execution the plans we had formed, he set off alone, counting to relieve his mother's anxiety, if so be she felt any concerning him, which was exactly what both young Chris and I should have had manhood enough to do.

There is no good reason why I should set down all that was said by my comrade and me while Jeremy was away, for we talked much that was foolish, I dare venture to say. Nor were we in any way disgruntled as Jeremy crept under the lumber pile, when the afternoon was nearly half spent, his pockets bulging with food which he had brought for us, he being a thoughtful lad where the comfort of his friends was concerned.

While we ate greedily, for to tell the truth both of us were anhungered, he gave us the pleasing information that no Britishers were to be seen in the vicinity of where the stranger was hidden.

It appeared surely as if the lobster-backs had come to believe that the spy made his way up Chestnut street, or sought refuge in some of the buildings there, rather than nearabout the coffee-house, and, as Jeremy said with a chuckle of satisfaction, matters were shaping themselves much as we would desire.

Jeremy had sufficient good sense to loiter around the London Coffee-House amid the throng of officers which frequented that place, hoping he might hear somewhat concerning the events of the forenoon, and in this he was not disappointed.

The lobster-backs, it seemed, were discussing over their ale whether the man who had been chased was indeed a spy, or some witless creature, as one of them put it, who had inadvertently said that which caused suspicion to fall upon him.

It appears that the man had been in the coffee-house seemingly for the sole purpose of taking refreshment; but, so one of the Britishers declared, keeping his ears open to all that was said around him.

Now it so chanced that one of the high and mighty lobster-backs who sported a sword, had proposed in a drunken spirit that all within the room should drink to the health of the king, and this man was so slow in responding, that instantly the Britisher asked him if he was for the king or for the colonies.

Now why it was, the man having come into Philadelphia as a spy, if indeed such had been the case, he should have hesitated to give the proper answer, I failed to understand, nor could Jeremy learn very much regarding the particulars of what occurred just at that moment. At all events, the stranger was immediately accused of being a spy, and when he indignantly denied it, was asked to go to headquarters that he might explain his business and tell why he was in Philadelphia at that time, if indeed he did not live in the city.

Without making reply to this suggestion, the man leaped to his feet, counting to trust to his heels rather than his tongue to get him out of the scrape. Whereupon, every red-coat customer in the coffee-house set chase after him, crying out as we had heard.

According to Jeremy's story, the Britishers were not greatly disturbed regarding the possibility that a spy from the American army had been among them. They rather took it for granted that the man was of no especial importance; that he could do them no harm, since nothing of a private nature had been discussed in the coffee-house. Because the farmers were allowed to come in from the country nearabout to sell their produce, it was not strange that one of them, and this man was seemingly a farmer by his garb, should be friendly to the colonies to such an extent as to hesitate about drinking the king's health.

All this was in favor, as a matter of course, of the man whom we had set out to befriend, for it told that there would not be a very strict watch kept over those who might attempt to leave the city, and again we knew, or believed we did, that there would be no especial guard stationed nearabout where the man had disappeared.

"It is all as plain sailing as a fellow could wish," young Chris said in a tone of satisfaction when Jeremy was come to an end of his story. "The British are here in such numbers, while our army is penned up in Valley Forge seemingly unable to make a move, that General Howe's officers do not fancy any danger can come to them from us rebels; therefore we have simply to carry out my plan of gaining speech with your friend the spy as soon as night has come, and you may set it down as certain, Richard Salter, that you will not be disturbed however long the conversation may be between you and the man. However, I would recommend that you put a stopper to your

tongue in decent time, discussing how it is possible for him to get out of the city, rather than striving to gratify your curiosity."

Young Chris's remarks rather nettled me, although I would not allow him to see it. I was a year his elder, and although I had done nothing which gave proof of my ability to serve the colonies, I counted that I was quite as able to conduct an affair of this kind, dangerous though it was, as he, and preferred in my folly to be looked on as the leader in this enterprise, rather than as one who must obey the command of others.

Therefore it was that I failed to make reply to his remark, and Jeremy was tired of talking, consequently we three fell silent, crouching in the *Jolly Rover* beneath the overhanging timbers until the sun went down, and darkness covered Dock creek even as it covered Philadelphia.

The night had come. There was no longer reason for us to hesitate or to linger, for we were only counting on darkness to favor us, rather than the lateness of the hour, and after assuring myself the coast was clear, by creeping out amid the timbers where I could have a fairly good view of the surroundings, I said in a whisper to Jeremy and young Chris that the time had come for us to make an attempt at gaining speech with the stranger.

CHAPTER II

THE SUGGESTION

If General Howe himself had been striving to make matters easy for us in the attempt to visit the spy, matters could not have gone more to our satisfaction.

Singularly enough, we failed to meet with a single squad of red-coats as we came up from Dock creek to Black Horse alley, and having arrived there, could see no one in the immediate vicinity.

At the London Coffee-House, just outside the doors, were mayhap half a dozen officers loitering as if waiting for some friend; but that gave me no concern, for those who held commissions in his majesty's army did not stoop to do such work as hunting down a spy, because there were plenty of the rank and file to whom they could detail anything which was disagreeable or laborious.

Therefore it was that we marched directly into the yard, taking fairly good care, however, not to make any great display of ourselves. Having come to the gate which led on Chestnut street, Jeremy went outside after we had decided that if either he or young Chris should see anything which was of a suspicious nature, they should give the alarm by each shouting the other's name, afterward making their way without delay to the *Jolly Rover* where, if so be I was not interfered with, I could meet them.

Then it was that young Chris went back to the entrance of Black Horse alley, and I was left alone

in the yard to seek out the man whom I had undertaken to befriend, even though he had not called upon me for such service.

I had marked well the place where he disappeared amid the decaying timbers, and, lying at full length, I forced my body beneath the rotten lumber until I was well inside the covering, when I called in a whisper:

"Hello there! I am the lad who lent you a hand this morning!"

While one might have counted ten there was no answer to my call, and not until I had repeated it twice did I hear anything betokening the man's whereabouts.

I was almost come to believe he had taken matters into his own hands, and, rather than trust to boys, had set about making his way out of the city. It was even when I was on the point of backing out from the uncomfortable hiding place that I heard a movement beyond me in advance, and then came a cautious whisper.

"Is there no danger in my coming out?"

"None so long as you remain quiet and are ready to take to cover again at the first alarm," I replied, and before the words were hardly out of my mouth, the man was so near that by stretching forth my hand I could touch him.

"Are they searching for me?" was his first question.

I replied to it by telling him all Jeremy had learned during the afternoon, whereupon he asked, as if even at this late hour there was some little distrust in his mind regarding my honesty of purpose in striving to aid him:

"Who are you, lad?"

"Richard Salter, son of that widow who lives in Drinker's alley, and, while the lobster-backs are here in Philadelphia, gains a livelihood by letting to them such rooms in our house as we do not occupy."

"There was another lad with you this morning?" he said in a questioning tone, and I replied promptly:

"Ay, that was Jeremy Hapgood; but now there is a third fellow who would strive to save you from the halter."

"And who may that be?"

"Young Chris, son of Christopher Ludwig the baker."

"Ah, Ludwig the baker; then surely that lad should be trusted," the stranger said, and in such a tone as nettled me, whereupon I cried incautiously loud, speaking sharply:

"There are none of us three who may fairly be suspected of doing aught save that which is for the good of the Cause, else would we have left you this morning to the mercies of the lobster-backs. If peradventure one of them had suspected that I was seeking to show you a hiding place, then would my shrift have been short indeed. In case you are acquainted here in Philadelphia, you know where I must of necessity have been at this moment if so be they got any hold upon me."

"Ay, ay, lad, I understand all that, and you must forgive me even for seeming to question your honesty; but when a man is as I am, lying 'twixt the halter and a bullet, it is not to be wondered that he questions every one around him, even those

who are seemingly doing what they may to lend him aid."

"Never mind that part of it," I interrupted hastily, ashamed of having given rein to my tongue at such a time. "I know not whether it may be possible for us lads to help you out of this scrape; but surely it seems to me we might do almost as much as men, since boys are not so likely to be suspected by the lobster-backs as those who are older grown."

"You may do as much as men, and even more, lad. Have you boys here in Philadelphia who love the Cause, no association such as the Boys of Liberty in Boston, or the Minute Boys in other colonies?"

"There is little chance we could have," I said with a laugh in which was no mirth. "Perhaps you do not know how closely we are watched by the lobster-backs."

"I dare venture to say you are in no worse condition than are other lads who, binding themselves together with the agreement to do whatsoever they may in aid of the colonies, have already succeeded in accomplishing very much. How many are there of your age, or thereabouts, in this city who may be trusted?"

Hurriedly I ran over in my mind those whom I knew to have favored the Cause, and said at random:

"A dozen mayhap. There possibly are more; but I do not now recall others with whom I would be willing to trust my liberty or my life. But do you really think boys no older than thirteen or fourteen years might aid the Cause?"

"Ay, of a verity I do, my lad. Are you not even now doing that which many a man who claims to be a true son of the colonies, would flinch at? To aid a spy in his escape is no slight crime in the eyes of those who serve the king."

"But this was something which happened unexpectedly," I replied, "and we would not find a like opportunity again in a lifetime, I might almost say."

"Ay; but if you and your friends sought for the opportunity, my lad, you could do very much, and particularly just at this time," the man said earnestly, as if it was of the utmost importance that he interest me in this matter, and his eagerness surprised me not a little. "With a dozen lads who were ready to do whatsoever they might, the work of men like me, who venture into the enemy's camp, might be lessened very greatly, and information sent out which could not otherwise be had by our people," the man continued, now with his lips close to my ear lest any might overhear.

"Tell me how it could be done?" I cried eagerly, now burning with the desire to do something which should give me a name among those who were struggling to throw off the yoke of the king, for until this moment I had not believed it possible lads like myself would be able to accomplish anything of importance.

"Suppose I wanted to send word to Valley Forge, or to Swede's Ford, or anywhere else you please, of what I have learned in this city, and yet desired to remain here longer in order to gather more information? How well you lads could serve the Cause by carrying such message —"

"Do you mean to General Washington?" I cried excitedly, now raising my voice so that the man laid his hand on my lips as he replied:

"Ay, to him, or to any other officer who might be waiting for the information. In fact, lad, there is no need why I should go into detail with you, explaining how a company of boys could aid the colonies here in Philadelphia, even as they have aided them elsewhere since this war for independence began. Instead of discussing that matter now, let us set about, if so be it is in our power, to say how I may get away from the city without loss of time?"

"And where would you go, sir?" I asked.

"Anywhere outside the British lines. My purpose is to reach Swede's Ford within four and twenty hours."

"Would you take the chances of going down the river as far as the mouth of the Schuylkill, in a small boat which is hardly more than a skiff?" I asked, and then told him of the *Jolly Rover,* whereupon he remained silent while one could have counted twenty, after which he said hesitatingly:

"I question much, lad, whether it would not be easier to get away by land rather than water, for from what I have seen, the lobster-backs are keeping close guard over the river."

"Ay, over the Delaware, but not the Schuylkill, and if Swede's Ford be the point you aim at, then it behooves you to go up the Schuylkill. I dare venture to promise that we could get the *Jolly Rover* out from beneath the lumber pile twixt now and midnight without any lobster-back being the wiser."

"Do you think I might dare venture out within an hour, say?" the man asked, and I replied, without hesitation:

"If so be you go with us, and make a move only when we give the word, allowing that you are my uncle, or cousin, or whatsoever blood kin you may choose to say in event of our being overhauled, then do I believe we might start this moment."

He showed himself inquisitive as to my plans, and I surely could make no complaint as to that, for the man was giving his life, so to speak, into my hands, and one could well fancy he would be curious to know whom he was thus trusting.

The result of all his questions and my answers was, that within five minutes I backed out from beneath the decaying timbers, ran to the entrance of Black Horse alley, and in the fewest possible words told young Chris what we were about to do, asking his opinion.

He felt quite as confident as I, that at this hour in the night we might safely make the venture, and after telling me to bring my spy out into the open, he ran to warn Jeremy that it was no longer necessary for him to remain on duty at the gate.

The stranger came promptly out at my bidding, and when he was standing in the yard, while we were waiting for young Chris and Jeremy to give the word that the coast was clear, I whispered warningly:

"If so be we come upon a squad of lobster-backs who are inclined to question us, it may be as well that you should claim to be my uncle who has come down from Germantown."

"And have you an uncle in Germantown, lad?" the man asked.

"Indeed I have not; but what concern might that be of yours?"

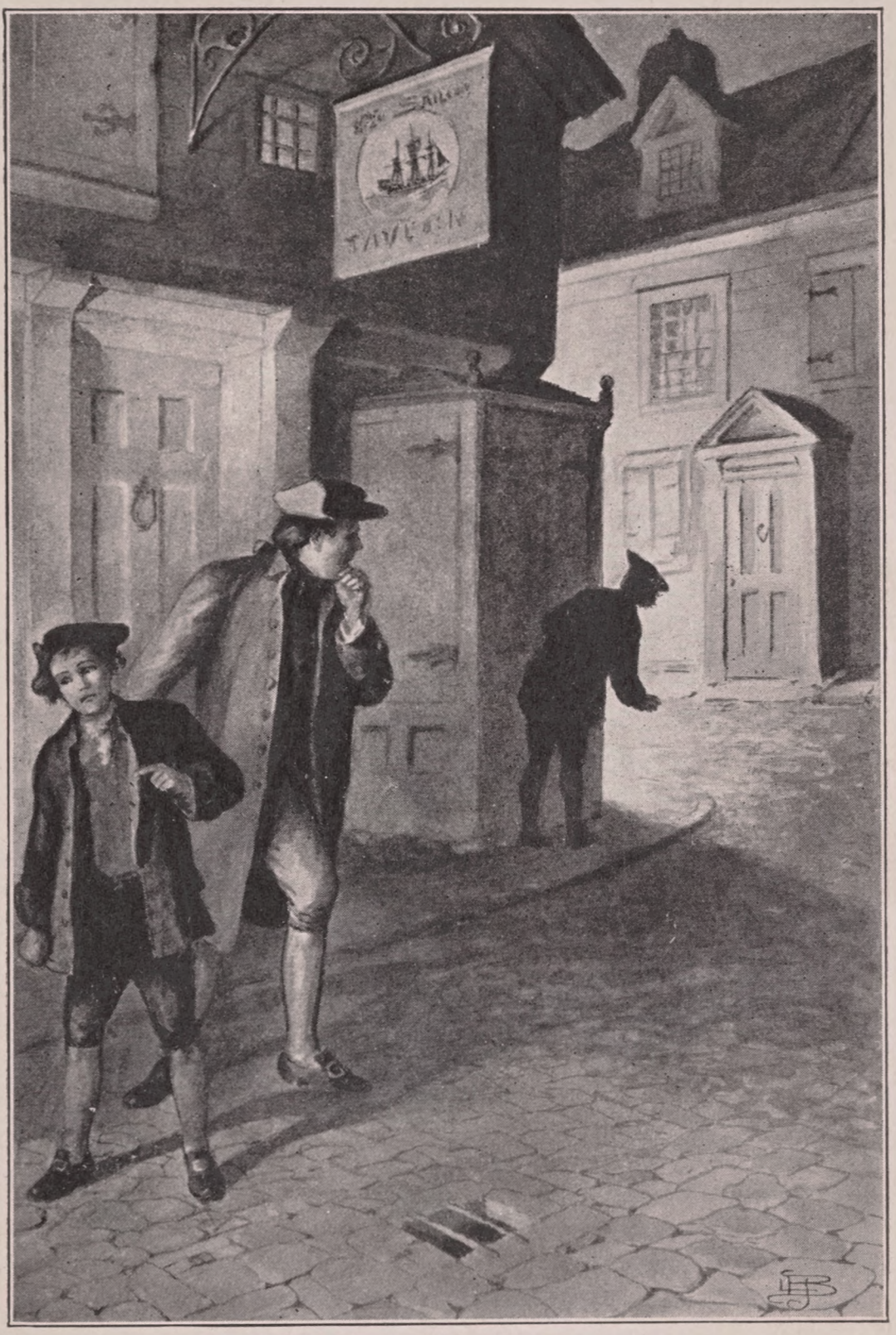
"Only this, my boy, that if you had one who lived in Germantown, and I should afterward come to grief, it might be the worse for him that you had used his name."

It pleased me not a little that the man should be thus careful for my safety, or for the safety of those who were near to me, and although I had had no distrust of him before, I felt every confidence from this on.

We lost no time, after young Chris had signaled that the coast was clear, in setting out from the shop-yard on the way to Dock creek; but you may be very certain that we kept strict watch ahead and behind, lest we should come upon, or be overtaken by, those whose duty it was to make certain that "rebels" were not abroad after the sun had set.

Now it may seem like some fanciful tale, rather than reality, that we could thus walk boldly abroad in the evening when the lobster-backs were supposed to be on the lookout for every one who was not of their kidney.

But it must be borne in mind that General Howe had long held possession of the city; that he had come to believe the American army was powerless to do anything against him; that he felt confident the people of Philadelphia would not dare make any attempt in their own behalf, and, in addition to all this, his men, officers as well as privates, had really grown careless, or I might say, lazy. They no longer were so keen to search out rebels, because



WE KEPT STRICT WATCH AHEAD AND BEHIND.

it might take them from their pleasures, and verily the king's men in our colony at this time were living a life of ease and of indolence.

Much of what I have just set down was said to me by the stranger as we walked, now in a group, and again stretched out in single file that we might the better guard against an approach of the enemy. And he spoke thus in order to let me understand that it was not difficult, if a man was willing to take his life in his hands, to play the spy upon General Howe's army.

"There is no reason why I should try to make you believe, lad, that this work of spying upon the red-coats is a simple matter, for hardly twelve hours are gone since you saw me fleeing for my life. That, however, was due to my own carelessness; but if a man so chooses, he may come into this city of Philadelphia and remain day in and day out without being questioned. It is the possibility of sending away his report, if so be he has one to make, which oftentimes puzzles him, and therefore was it that I spoke of you lads binding yourselves together here as Minute Boys, following the example of those in other colonies."

"What's that? What's that?" young Chris asked jealously, and the stranger, understanding that we must not hold overly much converse on the street, made reply by saying:

"It was a suggestion which I made to your comrade, and when we are where we can hold converse without danger of being overheard, or of running our necks into a noose, I will explain to you what I have broached to him."

Young Chris would have insisted upon knowing then and there all that had been said between the

stranger and myself; but Jeremy interrupted him by whispering sharply:

"I am not minded to linger here on the street in such company, even though it be your pleasure! Our affair is to get this man hidden in the *Jolly Rover* until he decides how he will leave the city, and until he has gone I'd have you bear strictly in mind, young Chris, that we are not to take more risks than may be absolutely necessary."

At another time and in another place, perhaps, young Chris would have made some sharp reply, for he was not overly patient when there was a suspicion of reproach. But just at this moment he understood, even as well as we, that he could not afford to be thin-skinned whatever might be said, and from then on there was no further need to urge him to move swiftly toward Dock creek, until we were come within sight of the lumber pile, when the four of us halted to make certain there were no prying eyes nearabout.

"The coast is clear," Jeremy said thirty seconds later.

And then, without hesitation, he led us to our hiding place, we following close at his heels.

Once we were concealed beneath the lumber pile, I said to myself that this was good token we would succeed in whatsoever was our purpose, for if we could come from Black Horse alley in company with the man who had but so lately been chased as a spy, and gain our place of refuge without any hindrance, then were we likely to make names for ourselves as Minute Boys.

Even while we were crawling beneath the timbers, did I repeat to myself the words "The Minute Boys of Philadelphia," and they had a pleasing ring

in my ears, for once we had banded ourselves together in such a company, and were given by the leaders of the American army work to do, then might we count ourselves as being well in the forefront of those who would free the colonies.

"It was easily done," young Chris said when the four of us were on board the *Jolly Rover,* and he spoke much as though he alone and unaided had brought all this thing about. "Now let us hear what it was you and Richard Salter had to say that was seemingly of importance," he added to the stranger.

Whereupon the man, and I could fancy he was smiling, although owing to the darkness it was impossible to see his face, because young Chris' tone was so high and mighty, began in a low tone:

"In the first place let me tell you who I am. My name is Josiah Dingley, and I did live at Germantown in that house next the Lutheran church, before the battle; but after that bloody day I cast my lines in with those who were struggling against the king, having been lukewarm in the Cause until then. Because of knowing this city well, I was sent here near to two weeks ago, and I believe the purpose of my visit was to prepare the way for some move which will shortly be made by our people at Valley Forge."

"And have you been in Philadelphia all that time?" Jeremy asked in surprise.

"Nay, lad, I have twice been to Valley Forge, and was but lately returned when you came upon me."

"And have you learned anything of importance in all that while?" I made bold to ask, whereupon the man replied quickly:

"That is not for me to say, lad. I have come upon certain things which were set me to learn; but further than that I must not speak. Now it is of importance that some other take my place, for after having played the simple in the London Coffee-House, I must expect to be recognized if so be I should chance to come upon those lobster-backs who were there at that time. I have been thinking over your proposition that I go out from the city by means of this skiff, and I am more than inclined to believe it might be done."

"But first let us hear what it was, Master Dingley, that you had to say to Richard while you two were in the shop-yard?" young Chris interrupted, and the spy replied:

"I will leave that for your comrade to tell you later. Just now it behooves me to speak of other matters. Are you lads still of the mind to take the chances of pulling down the Delaware in this craft?"

"Indeed we are," I replied stoutly. "If so be you will take the risk for yourself, we lads will chance it on our part, and I dare venture to say that between now and daylight we shall not only have carried you to some point beyond the British lines; but be back here with the skiff safely hidden once more. The watch which the lobster-backs have been keeping over us rebels of late is not as sharp as it might be."

Now it may seem to some as if I spoke at random in thus declaring that we could go out from our hiding place, run down the Delaware, and then up the Schuylkill river so far as this man might want to go, while the Britishers claimed that they kept sharp guard over both rivers.

It would seem at first sight almost impossible, and yet we lads had come to know the movements of the guard-boats so well that unless something unforeseen took place, we might venture to state positively where this or that patrol would be at a given time.

I am not minded to make it appear as if there was no danger in the enterprise, for surely there was, and in plenty.

If it should so chance that we lads were taken while we had Master Dingley on board, and he was shown later to be the same man who had been chased out of the London Coffee-House, then might we reasonably expect to share the same fate as his, and all know what a spy meets with when he has been taken within an enemy's lines.

In addition to that, if after we had landed the man we were overhauled by the Britishers, then would it be indeed difficult for us to explain why we were abroad at that time of the night, for I am of the opinion that neither Lord Howe, nor any of his officers, would accept as excuse for us the fact that we were eager to go boating, and had simply hit by chance upon such an hour.

Whether the odds were in our favor or against us, however, the die was cast, as you might say, when we had made the proposition that we would take Master Dingley away.

And now that he much the same as declared his willingness, as well as his desire, that we should carry out that which was the same as a promise, it behooved us to make ready for the enterprise in such manner as if believing we might come to grief before it was ended.

In order to do this it was necessary we send

some word to our people at home, for while we might excuse ourselves because of having remained away so long without announcing an intended absence, it would be little less than cruelty to keep silence until morning, since all three of us knew full well how deeply our mothers would mourn, believing we had come into some trouble with the hirelings of the king who were ever so ready to get us rebels on the hip.

There was no good reason why all should go out on such an errand, and therefore it was I proposed that we cast lots to see who should be the messenger.

To this young Chris made decided objections. He declared it was his intention to know what secrets Master Dingley and I talked while we were hidden in the old stable back of the shop off Black Horse alley, and if so be the lot fell on him to carry word to our parents, then would he miss the chance of gaining what he believed was valuable information.

I was truly vexed with the lad because of his obstinacy, and for bringing up such a trifling matter at a time when we were engaged in work of grave import; but, luckily, before I could utter those angry words which were already in my mouth, Jeremy said:

"I am well content to hear what Richard and Master Dingley may have to tell us, at some later day, therefore, young Chris, if you are determined the story must be told you at once, I will take it upon myself to warn our people that we may be away from home mayhap four and twenty hours."

"Why make it such a long time?" young Chris asked grumblingly. "There is no question but

that we shall be back by daylight if we come at all —"

"Do not speak so rashly, my young friend," Master Dingley said gravely. "There may be very many good reasons why it would be safer for you to remain away from home eight and forty hours, or even longer, than to return at once, therefore let your people know exactly what you are about, and how many are the chances against your returning soon."

Jeremy did not wait for any discussion on this point, but without further delay started from amid the timbers to gain the outer air, which was a work of no little time owing to the fact that he must first assure himself the coast was clear before going into the open.

Young Chris and I, who had so often done that which Jeremy was now doing, gave little heed to his movements, save as a matter of course that we kept our ears open to hear any token of a mishap, and after waiting two or three minutes, at the end of which time we could safely calculate Jeremy was speeding on his way, young Chris said in a peremptory tone:

"Now, if it please you, Richard Salter, we will hear what that great secret is between you and Master Dingley."

"It is no secret whatsoever, and a matter that could better have been told you to-morrow, or the next day, than now. But since you are so greedy for the information, and so jealous lest something had been said of which you are not fully informed, I will explain the matter."

Then it was that I told the lad what Master Dingley had said regarding our forming a certain

number of Philadelphia lads into a company of Minute Boys, and straightway the baker's son was in an ecstasy of joy.

It was to him a most happy idea, for Chris delights in being at the head of whatever may be going on, and this enrolling himself as one of the colony's defenders, even though he might not be able to serve her to advantage, was much to his liking.

Without stopping to consider the matter, he declared stoutly that we could enroll no less than twenty lads in such a company, all of whom would be ready to do whatsoever they might be called upon, and while he was thus telling what a simple matter it would be, Master Dingley interrupted him by saying gravely:

"Be cautious, lad. Remember that whomsoever you shall ask to join in such an enterprise much the same as holds your life in his hands, and make certain before you speak one word of your secret, that he to whom you are talking may be trusted so long as life remains in his body."

"I will answer for all of those lads whom I have in mind," young Chris replied carelessly, and I fancied that Master Dingley made a gesture of impatience, for this matter which might turn so seriously for all concerned, was being treated altogether too lightly by young Chris.

It behooved him, as well as all of us who were minded to join in the enterprise, to realize fully with what danger it was attended. If we formed the company, it should be with the knowledge that our lives might pay the penalty, for if so be we were taken while carrying information out of the

city, or bringing it in, then was it certain we would end our days on the scaffold.

It was as if Master Dingley understood that it would be useless to argue with young Chris while he was so excited, and therefore held his peace, as did I, while the baker's son continued to name lad after lad whom he would urge to become Minute Boys, many of whom I knew had a leaning toward the king, or, if they failed to have any decided opinions themselves, came of such rabid Tory stock that we could not afford to give up our secret to them.

However, it matters little what I thought, or what young Chris said just then. The work in hand was to carry Master Dingley beyond the British lines, and in the doing of it we might meet with such misadventure that there would be no Minute Boy business for us in this world.

After a time young Chris grew weary with carrying on a conversation in which neither the spy nor I joined, and during mayhap half an hour we sat there silently in the *Jolly Rover,* hearing now and then the tramp of the lobster-backs as they marched too and fro in squads to make certain we rebels of Philadelphia were not plotting against the king, when came sounds from outside which told that Jeremy was returning.

An instant later he was beside me, panting heavily as evidence that he had been running at full speed, and unable for the moment to speak.

"Well?" young Chris asked impatiently, "have you seen all our people?"

"Yes," Jeremy panted, "and none of them favored our going away."

"Did my mother order me to return home?" I asked anxiously, and by this time Jeremy had so far regained his breath that it was possible to speak.

"She did not say you *must* come, but it was easy to understand her desire you should do so, and when I said that we had committed ourselves to aiding Master Dingley, she held her peace, but looked mightily discontented."

"It is not my purpose, lad, to insist upon your carrying out the promise made, for I understand full well how dangerous it may be, if your parents are unwilling you should make the venture," the spy interrupted. "You have already done me a good turn, and if peradventure you believe it your duty to stay here, then shall I go my way as best may be, feeling that you lads have saved my life for a time, at all events. If it is sacrificed now, it will be through no fault of yours."

"We will go as was agreed," young Chris cried impatiently. "I have no doubt but that father would like to have me stay with him in order to help in the bakery, but when work like this can be done by us lads, we must not think about what those at home may have to say regarding it."

"That is where you make a grievous mistake, my lad," Master Dingley said gravely. "Your first duty is toward your parents; then shall come the colony, if you please. But until you are men grown, remember that the only safe plan is to act as your mother, who surely is a lad's best friend, would have you."

"There is no question in my mind whatsoever but that if we were this moment in our homes, and should state exactly what had occurred during the

day, there would be no protest made against our going with you, sir," I interrupted, determined that whether we formed a company of Minute Boys or not, I would have a hand in this saving of a human life, at the same time that we got the best of the lobster-backs.

"It shall be as you say, lads, although my mind would be easier if you went with your parents' consent. Now when shall we set out?" the spy asked in a low tone, whereupon I replied, before young Chris had an opportunity:

"At once. There is no reason why we should make delay, save to be certain the river is clear, and then I propose that we creep down within the shadow of the bank until we are a goodly distance from here, after which, unless matters have changed greatly of late, we shall, I believe, be beyond the point of danger."

Without waiting for the word, Jeremy crept out toward the water's edge where was an overhanging plank that afforded us a famous resting place while we spied upon the lobster-backs, and within five minutes he came back, giving us the welcome information that there was no guard-boat in sight.

After that we lost no time. There were few preparations to make, save that of pushing the skiff out from beneath the timbers, which was a task requiring considerable strength, because we were forced to tip her first this way and then that, in order to avoid the planks which ran on either side considerably nearer the water than her height would admit of passage.

In this work Master Dingley aided us not a little, and within mayhap fifteen minutes fom the time

Jeremy had come back, we were out of the hiding place, creeping cautiously well within the shadow of the right-hand shore as we started on the dangerous enterprise.

Save for the twinkling of the lights from the fleet, and the hum of voices which came to us from over the water as the sailors lounged around the decks of the war vessels talking, there were no signs of life.

Shoreward, in our immediate vicinity, it was dark as a negro's pocket, with never a sound betokening the presence of human beings, and Jeremy whispered in my ear as we two worked one oar while Master Dingley and young Chris worked the other, that it was a good token we had got away thus readily.

I nervously bade him hold his peace. Until we were really committed to the work, I had failed to realize all the dangers, but now that we were afloat where the lobster-backs might come upon us at any moment, my heart began to fail me.

While I would not have turned back now that my hand was on the plow, so to speak, it would have pleased me wondrously if we had never come across Master Dingley, however eager I was to do whatsoever lay in my power to aid the colonies.

If we could go out with the soldiers and stand up in manly fashion against the Britishers, then might I be proud; but this aiding a spy, with a shameful death before us if we were captured, was something to make the cold chills of fear run up and down a fellow's spine.

However, we were embarked in the enterprise, and it stood me in hand to do whatsoever I might

toward making it a success, because of the price which failure would cost.

There was little we could do just then, save to row as swiftly as was consistent with silence, for we dared not lift the oars so that any noise might be made, because, as everyone knows, the water carries sound a long distance, and even while hidden from view, we might betray our whereabouts through carelessness.

We were forced to keep on down the river in order to come to the mouth of the Schuylkill, and in so doing must pass all the king's ships. If peradventure some officer was putting off from the Philadelphia side to go to his vessel, and we were come just at that time nearabout his course, then were we in danger.

You can well fancy, as we neared the huge craft, with what caution we worked the oars. It was as if I hardly dared to breathe; as though the sound of my heart-beats would give the alarm, and before we were five minutes on our way I was dripping with perspiration, caused, I am free to confess, by fear, while I was almost as wet as if I had gone over the skiff into the water.

I have talked later with lads who claimed that it was impossible the smallest skiff could make her way, even during the darkest night, past all that fleet where it was reasonable to suppose the sharpest of sharp watch was kept; but yet that we did, going our course without being hailed by man or boy, by lobster-back or patriot.

If we had had the power to direct events according to our own pleasure, matters could not have worked more favorably for us, because, as I now

look back upon that short voyage, it seems to me almost beyond belief that we could have done what we did without bringing about our ears a very nest of red-backed hornets.

Now in order that you may know how the lobster-backs guarded our city of Philadelphia, and what danger we lads were running our noses into, I count to set down here that which I have read within the week, and it was written by one who has seen it drawn out in clerkly fashion on a map belonging to General Howe.

"The line of intrenchments from the Delaware to the Schuylkill extended from the mouth of the creek just above Willow street to the upper ferry on the Schuylkill. They consisted of ten redoubts connected by strong palisades. The first redoubt, which was garrisoned by the Queen's Rangers under Simcoe, was near the forks of the roads leading to Frankford and Kensington. The second redoubt was a little west of North Second and Noble streets; the third between North Fifth and Sixth and Noble and Buttonwood streets; the fourth on Eighth street between Noble and Buttonwood; the fifth on Tenth between Buttonwood and Pleasant; the sixth on Buttonwood between Thirteenth and North Broad; the seventh on North Schuylkill Eighth between Pennsylvania avenue and Hamilton street; the eighth on North Schuylkill Fifth and Pennsylvania avenue; the ninth on North Schuylkill Second near Callowhill street, and the tenth on the bank of the Schuylkill at the upper ferry.

"The encampment extended westward from North Fifth, between Vine and Callowhill, as far as North Schuylkill Second. The Hessian grena-

diers were encamped between Callowhill, Noble, Fifth and Seventh streets. The Fourth, Fortieth and Fifty-fifth British grenadiers, and a body of fusileers, were on the north side of Callowhill, between Seventh and Fourteenth streets. Eight regiments lay upon the high ground around Bush's hill, extending from Fourteenth, nearly on a line with Vine, to the upper ferry.

"Near the redoubt at the Ferry was another body of Hessians. The Yagers, horse and foot, were encamped upon that hill near the corner of North Schuylkill, Front and Pennsylvania avenue. On the Ridge Road near Thirteenth street, and on Eighth, near Green, were corps of infantry. Light dragoons and three regiments of infantry were posted near the pond between Vine, Race, North Eighth and Twelfth streets. A little below the middle ferry, at the foot of Chestnut street, was a fascine redoubt, and near it the Seventy-first regiment was encamped. Some Yagers were stationed at the Point House opposite Gloucester.

"When winter set in, many of the troops and all the officers, occupied the public buildings and houses of the inhabitants, also the British barracks in the Northern Liberties. The artillery were quartered in Chestnut street between Third and Sixth street, and the State House yard was made a park for their use. During the winter, General Howe occupied a house on High street where Washington afterwards resided; his brother, Lord Howe, lived in Chestnut street; General Knyphausen lived in South Second opposite Little Dock street. Cornwallis' quarters were in Second above Spruce street, and Major Andre lived in Dr. Franklin's house in a court back from High street."

Thus it is you can see that our city was literally filled with lobster-backs, and not only the city, but the banks of the river, while in the stream itself lay their ships of war, and we three lads were forcing ourselves to believe we could move at will, carrying information to our people at Valley Forge, or wheresoever it might be wanted, without running into these red-coated scoundrels who had come overseas to whip us into loving the king.

I believe now it would have been wiser had we gone boldly up the Delaware beyond Frankford, and there let Master Dingley take his chances of going across country to the Schuylkill; but he had spoken as if the only way for us to proceed would be to pull down the river as far as League island and then up the Schuylkill, therefore, without considering how much more of danger lay in that route than the other, I had consented.

Therefore was our journey more than three times what it should have been had we proceeded, as I now believe, with more of common sense in our methods.

CHAPTER III

SKINNY BAKER

Now, after having set down all dangers which compassed us, as if making ready to tell some tale of wondrous adventure, I am forced to come down from my high horse and say that we sailed, or rather rowed, the boat directly around the city until we were come to the Falls of the Schuylkill, without having been hailed by man or child.

Here it was, as a matter of course, that Master Dingley counted to set off by himself, and when he would have praised us for what we had done in his behalf, I know full well that my cheeks were mantled with shame, for children half our age could have performed the work equally as well under the same circumstances; but yet he put it as if we had accomplished what might have been brought about by none others.

It was a little past midnight when we pulled up under a clump of bushes that he might step ashore, and waited there to hear what he had to say regarding our forming a company of Minute Boys.

Until this moment we had not ventured to speak one with another, save in the most cautious of whispers, and only on such matters as were absolutely necessary for the working of the craft. But now we were in comparative safety, he harked back to his proposition that we band ourselves together in a company for the purpose of doing whatsoever

we might to aid the colonies, and took down our names, together with such information as would serve to show him where we lived if peradventure he came into the city, or sent another who would seek us out.

The result of all his talk was, as might be supposed, the agreement on our part to do, without loss of time, exactly as he had proposed.

We even went so far as to say that he might, on any day at the hour of noon, find one of us three lads loitering roundabout the front of the London Coffee-House, agreeing to go there regularly as if it was a post of duty, and to hold ourselves in readiness to perform whatsoever anyone, who could show to our satisfaction that he had come from the American camp, should desire us to do.

"I'm thinking that before a week has passed I shall visit at the home of one or another of you lads, for now that you have agreed to do that which will provide us with means of sending information out from the city, whosoever goes there to spy upon the Britishers may remain, without taking the many chances of detection by going out himself frequently."

Then Master Dingley had very much more to say regarding our duties, and of what value we might be to the colonies, all of which it is not necessary I should set down here, for if so be I ever bring to an end this poor attempt at a story of the Minute Boys of Philadelphia, you will see, as one incident follows another, that which he had set for us to do.

He lost no time after receiving our promises that we would get together immediately to raise our company of Minute Boys, and also that one or

another of us would be in front of the London Coffee-House each day; but then left us, moving away at a swift pace as though minded to finish his journey before sunrise, if indeed that might be possible.

It would have pleased me right well if we could have stayed there within the shelter of the bushes during a certain time, for I was wearied as if having labored severely, when, as a matter of fact, I had worked no harder than I would have worked had we been out on a pleasure voyage. The anxiety, the fear that we might come suddenly upon the lobster-backs, was what had worn me down almost to the verge of exhaustion; yet I knew that we must continue on, for unless our journey was done before daybreak, and our skiff back in her old hiding place, then were we come to grief.

Therefore it was that immediately Master Dingley disappeared amid the bushes, we pulled the *Jolly Rover* out into the stream, and, having grown careless, I suppose, because of coming thus far in safety without meeting any who might do us an ill turn, instead of taking due heed to remain within the shadow of the bank, we kept the middle of the river, giving little or no heed to the noise which might be made by the oars. As young Chris said, it would be time enough to creep along at a snail's pace while remaining hidden from view, when we were come to where there was chance of being overhauled by the red-coats.

But however boldly we might go on, our progress was not so rapid but that there were signs in the eastern sky of coming day when we neared Gilson's point, and even a blind man could have

said that we would not be able to gain Dock creek before the sun had fairly shown himself.

All this at the moment did not seem of very great importance. We could readily enough find a hiding place for our skiff during a twelve-hours, and strike across the city to our homes, contenting ourselves with the knowledge that we would return next night to carry the *Jolly Rover* back to Dock creek.

Therefore it was at the next clump of bushes, or rather thicket, which we came upon, the skiff was run up on the bank, and we spent no little time in hiding her securely amid the foliage, after which we set off at a rapid pace for home, having, as it may well be supposed, an eye out for any straggling lobster-backs.

Strange as it may seem, it was not a Britisher who brought us for the time being to grief, but rather one of our people — I might almost say one of our own comrades.

When the day had fully dawned we were no less than a mile from Chestnut street. Then was the time when it seemed that we might safely come upon any number of Britishers, for surely lads of our age were likely to be out thus early in the morning, for pleasure, if not on some household errand.

We were walking carelessly along, feeling that the matter which we had in hand was well finished, and congratulating ourselves that, lads though we were, we had within the past four and twenty hours saved the life of a man who was struggling to aid in this war against the king.

Suddenly we came upon Benjamin Baker, "Skinny" we called him, a lad for whom I never

had any great affection, nor did I consider him an enemy, save in so far as his father was a rabid Tory.

Now if I had had my wits about me, I would have seen by the expression on Skinny's face that he knew more concerning our movements than we could readily suspect, for there was a certain ugly leer upon his face as he halted us by coming to a full stop directly in our path, as he asked:

"Are you lads out often as early as this?"

"It seems we are out no earlier than you, Skinny," young Chris said with a laugh, and would have pushed the lad aside in order to continue on his way, but that Skinny stopped him very suddenly and caused the faces of us all to whiten, as he asked in a meaning tone:

"Why did you leave your skiff down by the Point? Why not have come around in her?"

While one might have counted twenty we three stood staring at him in open-mouthed astonishment, and then I managed to ask in a voice which I knew was tremulous with fear:

"How do you chance to know whether we left the boat anywhere or not?" And then I added like the simple that my timorousness had made me, "we haven't been out in a boat this many a day."

"And yet you hid one in the thicket, Richard Salter. As a matter of fact, I chance to know that you came down the Schuylkill. From where, I can't say; but my idea is that if the king's servants should know you had been spending the night on the river, it would be necessary to make some explanation."

For the life of me I could not have made reply to the lad at that moment; but young Chris, whose

temper is prone to rise beyond all bounds of prudence, caught him roughly by the shoulder as he asked angrily:

"Have you been spying upon us, Skinny Baker? Have you dared to follow us this night?"

"And what if I have? Who shall bring me to account? Surely you three, who must have been engaged in some business which has to do with the rebels, will not dare question me."

"You shall see whether we dare or not!" Chris cried in a rage as he seized Skinny by the throat, and for the instant I believed it was in his mind to throttle the lad, therefore I sprang forward, catching him by the arm as I said warningly:

"Be careful, Chris, be careful!"

Before I could say more, Skinny Baker, an evil look on his ugly face, said in a tone as of triumph:

"Ay, Richard Salter, young Chris, as well as you and Jeremy Hapgood, have reason to be careful with me now. I have long had it in mind that you would play into the hands of the rebels if so be you had the chance, and now I know it for a verity."

"How do you know it?" Jeremy cried, and Skinny said, speaking slowly as though it gave him the greatest pleasure to torture us:

"I know it because I saw you going down the Delaware when there were four in your skiff, and I followed along the bank until having come to the Point, where I waited, thinking you must return that way. Where is he whom you had with you?"

I verily believe anyone could have knocked me down with a feather, so to speak, when the churlish lad thus gave us to understand that he was in possession of our secret. I knew full well it was in

his heart to use it to our harm whenever he had the opportunity, and of a verity there would not be lacking chances in our city of Philadelphia for him to impart to enemies of the Cause such information as he had stolen.

We three lads stood gazing at each other in dismay, while Skinny, looking first at one and then another, grinned with delight, for he well knew how much of fear he had caused us.

It might have been better for him if he had been willing to delay his triumph a while longer; but the evil-minded Tory must needs make it yet more plain that he held us under his thumb, and said jeeringly:

"And now, unless I am mightily mistaken, it is I who will do the fiddling while you dance to my tune."

I can't say what there was in the words which caused me to have a clearer understanding of the situation than I would otherwise have gained, owing to my great fear; but on the instant there came into my mind like a flash of light that this fellow's tongue must be stopped at any hazard. That it was for our own safety he be put out of the way.

Not for a moment did I dream of committing a crime; but by putting him out of the way, I meant that in some manner, such as had not come into my mind as yet, he must be silenced, or we stood good chance of being hanged.

Young Chris, in obedience to my gesture of a few seconds previous, had released his hold of Skinny's throat, and now it was my turn to grab the Tory by the neck, holding myself ready to choke him if he should make any outcry, as I said hurriedly to Jeremy and Chris:

"This fellow knows so much that if we allow him to go free this moment, we are likely to find ourselves under that beast of a Cummingham's thumb, for to prison we shall surely go if he wags his tongue!"

"And how may we stop him?" Jeremy asked in a tremulous tone, whereupon I replied, speaking from impulse as it were:

"That I know not just now. At least, at such an early hour, unless peradventure we come across a squad of lobster-backs, we should be able to force him to to go with us to the old hiding place where we have kept the skiff, and once there we must decide upon some plan for keeping his tongue quiet."

I believe of a verity that the cowardly cur thought we had it in mind to kill him, for straightway all expression of triumph faded from his face, and but for my hold on his throat he would have begged, like the coward that he was, for mercy.

He did succeed in uttering a few words; but I was not in the mood to listen to what he might say, for though he had promised until he was black in the face to hold his peace, I never would have given him credit of keeping the truth.

It was his liberty against our lives, and if so be any venture, however bold, could save us, I was determined it should be the Tory who would suffer.

Had it been an hour later in the day, I question whether we could have forced Skinny along, for whoever had seen us, with me clutching him by the throat, while Jeremy and young Chris prodded him from behind, would have known that he was a prisoner.

Realizing that the instant my grasp upon his neck was relaxed ever so slightly, he would shout for help, and he was already pale with fear, I was forced to keep him half-choked, while but for Jeremy and young Chris alternately pushing and pulling, he would not have advanced a pace.

As it was, however, we succeeded in forcing him at reasonably good speed, and, as we had been during the night, so were we now, favored by fortune, for save here and there a servant girl out on some errand, we met no person until we were come within two squares of our destination.

Then there appeared suddenly, coming from around the corner of Second street, a squad of lobster-backs who were beginning their work of the day by marching to and fro, with the hope of finding some so-called rebel who had transgressed General Howe's laws so far as to bring him within their power.

It seemed to me that at that moment were we come to the end of our rope, and had it not been for Jeremy I truly believe I must have turned tail and run at my best pace, leaving Skinny Baker to go wheresoever he would.

"Keep right on, boys; keep on and make them think it is all in the way of sport," Jeremy said in a hoarse whisper, as he pushed Skinny yet harder, and began at the same time to cry out that he should soon learn what it meant to be ducked.

"The odds are that we shall find ourselves in the guard-house mighty soon," young Chris said, and I could almost fancy that his teeth were chattering with fear.

Yet he could do no better than follow the ad-

vice given by Jeremy, because there was no other course to be pursued, unless we would desert the prisoner, leaving him free to tell all he knew concerning us.

It is impossible for me to so set it down that you can understand how terrified I was as we rapidly approached the British squad, for I had no faith whatsoever that Jeremy's plan would work, and if, when we were come within a dozen paces of them, the corporal who was in command had called upon me to speak, I believe it would have been beyond my power.

He did call upon one of us, however, and it was Jeremy who acted the part of spokesman — Jeremy who proved himself brave, braver than either Chris or I, for he said laughingly, as if it were one of the best jokes he had ever heard:

"This lad believes Washington's ragamuffin army can march into Philadelphia whenever it feels so disposed, and we are taking him down to the creek where we count on washing some of the rebel ideas out of him."

"Dip him deep, lads," the corporal cried laughingly, making no attempt to stop us. "It is a pity you couldn't have more of the rebels to serve in the same fashion, for were I in command of this city there would be less treason talked. Dip him deep!"

"Ay, that we will, sir, never fear. I am not certain that we won't anchor him out where he can soak for a while," Jeremy replied, still laughing, and at the same time doing all within his power to force Skinny on at a yet swifter pace.

That which I have just set down had hardly more than been spoken when we were past the

squad, and hurrying as we had never hurried before to gain that poor shelter on Dock creek.

Then it was that young Chris, looking back to make certain the red-coats were not inclined to follow us in order to see the sport, called out to me that unless I was minded to kill Skinny Baker then and there, it would be best I unloosened my hold upon his throat.

Indeed it was time I did so, for the fellow was literally blue in the face when I looked at him. Until this instant I had failed to realize how much force I was exerting, and if peradventure young Chris had not seen him in time, I verily believe I should have killed the lad unwittingly.

Then, when I did release my grasp, and the fellow could draw a long breath, instead of talking with us like a decent lad, he must needs go to begging and imploring, as if he believed it was in our minds to slaughter him as we would a pig.

Even though I had had any sympathy in my mind prior to that moment, it would have all vanished with those cowardly words. Instead of making reply, we forced him on, Jeremy saying in a tone which told he was making no idle threat, that unless Skinny went on at his best pace he would prod him in the back with his pocket knife.

Skinny quickened his steps. In fact, had we told him to do anything whatsoever that lay within his power, so frightened was the cur that he would have attempted it without making protest, and it would have pleased me right well to have pummeled him severely, not because of the threats he had made against us, but because he was showing himself such a poltroon.

"We'll soon have him under cover," Jeremy said as if believing that young Chris and I needed heartening, and I could not refrain from asking:

"What then? If we get him under cover, how long may we keep him there? Surely we must set the fellow at liberty before night falls."

"That shall depend upon himself," Jeremy replied much as though he had already formed some plan for the future. "If he refuses to do as we say, then will I hold him there a prisoner till the crack of doom, if so be he and I stay on this earth till then."

I verily believe I was almost as much dismayed by Jeremy's threat as by what Skinny had said when he first met us, for it seemed as if we were sinking deeper and deeper into a mire from which there could be no escape.

We had begun this piece of work by aiding a spy, and thereby bringing upon ourselves the shadow of the gallows. Now had we grown so bold as to make prisoner of a lad whose Tory father would unquestionably have no slight influence with General Howe.

However, we had made our bed, and must lie in it. The question to be decided was, not what would please us, but how we might best shut this fellow's mouth, and that was indeed a serious matter. Let him once be free of us, regardless of how many oaths he had taken to keep secret that which had been done this night, he would break them as a child breaks a bunch of straws, for there was no truth in the lad, as we fellows had known this many a day.

As a matter of course, we pushed on at our best pace, for if peradventure we met another squad

of lobster-backs, it might not be possible to shut their eyes as readily as we had those who were just passed, and our present safety lay in getting beneath that pile of lumber where there were at least a few chances we might escape being taken by General Howe's men.

You may rest assured that we hustled Skinny beneath the decaying timbers, once we were come to the lumber pile, as rapidly as might be, and in so doing were we putting ourselves yet farther in his power, for he would know the secret of our hiding place.

If he escaped us to tell his story to the lobster-backs, then must we find some other refuge, if indeed we were allowed to go free sufficiently long to seek one.

I verily believe Skinny thought he was being taken to the place of his murder, when we forced him to his hands and knees, for one could not gain the shelter save by creeping. It was necessary we literally shove him along in order to make any advance; but once we were come inside where no less than thirty lads might have found a fairly good resting place, the expression of fear on his face faded somewhat, and I dare venture to say it came on mine instead.

There was no evading the fact that, having gone so far as we had on this road which was pointed out to us by Master Dingley, we must hold Skinny for no one could say how long, since it was imprudent to depend upon his word; and how might that be done, I asked myself.

Perhaps it was well for me that at this time Jeremy, having an eye to our necessities and our situation, proposed that he go out to our homes

in order to say we were come safely back to Philadelphia, and, perhaps, to explain in what situation we were, as well as to get food sufficient to last us during four and twenty hours.

This was no more than a necessity, and I bade the lad go with all speed, urging that he make the matter of as little importance to my mother as might be, lest she, dear soul, should die with anxiety.

Now it was that young Chris, having succeeded in doing his share of carrying Master Dingley to a place of safety, began to take upon himself the airs of a leader, and insisted that he also must go out, leaving me to guard the prisoner, at the same time claiming that there was no real need more than one of us should remain on duty at a time.

It was true I could take care of Skinny, so far as preventing him from making any outcry or escaping was concerned; but at the same time I was not pleased to remain there alone, although I can hardly say why.

However, there was nothing I, or in fact anyone, could say to change young Chris' mind after it was once made up, and when Jeremy hastened out in order to take advantage of the hour, for the lobster-backs would not be abroad in any numbers so early in the morning, the baker's son went with him, while Skinny and I were left in that dreary hiding place, facing each other much, I fancy, like two Kilkenny cats who only await the opportunity to spring one upon the other.

I was not in the mood for conversation, having so much of disagreeable forebodings in my mind that I could give heed to little else than the situa-

tion into which we had plunged ourselves; but Skinny, eager, as a matter of course, to learn what he might regarding our plans as they affected himself, asked in a whining tone, when mayhap we had remained silent three or four minutes:

"How long do you count on keeping me here?"

"That depends, Master Baker, considerably upon yourself, and yet more upon our willingness to take your word. You must understand that we cannot afford to let you go free to carry to the lobster-backs that information which you have gained this night by spying."

"But unless you kill me outright, I must go at some time. It is impossible you can keep me here many days, even though you would dare do such a thing, for my father will speedily seek the city through in search of me."

I knew full well we could not keep him there very long, and it was that which was causing me the greatest anxiety, yet I was not disposed to let the fellow see that the situation worried me in the slightest degree; but replied with as much of carelessness as I could assume:

"It remains to be seen how long we can keep you here, and also whether it will be possible for your father, seek as he may, to find you while we remain hidden here. We have had this lumber pile as a rendezvous ever since the lobster-backs marched into Philadelphia, and as yet it has been undiscovered."

"That may be," Skinny replied with a world of truth in his words; "but until to-day there has never been any serious reason for seeking you out. I dare venture to say I am the first prisoner you have attempted to take, and now is come the time

when the people of the town, meaning those who are ready to obey the king, will be in arms against you."

"All of which may be true," I said with a laugh which had in it little of mirth. "But at the same time, Skinny, you are bound to stay with us until we can decide upon some way of letting you go free without danger to ourselves. If so be you should make any attempt at getting away while I am on guard, let me warn you that, in order to save my own life, I would take yours with no more hesitation than I would crush a fly."

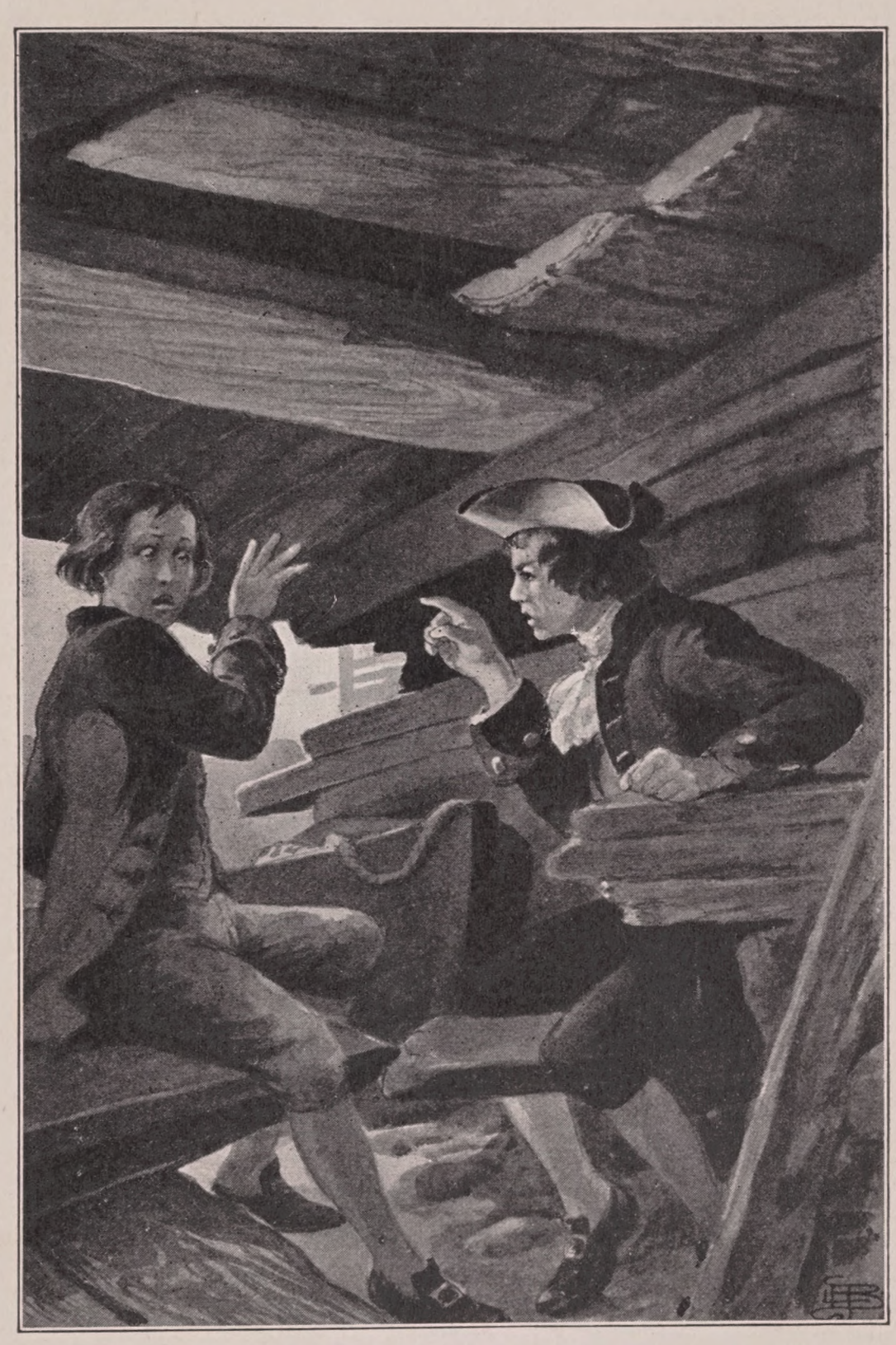
"You would commit murder?" and Skinny's face paled, as I could see even in the gloom.

"I could kill you and not call it murder."

"Yet you rebels make a great howl about that which the king's men do, if so be they take the life of one of your kidney," the cur said with a snarl which sounded to me much like the hiss of an angry cat.

"The lobster-backs kill those whose only crime consists in striving to free themselves from the burdens which the king has put upon them, while whatever we might do to you would be in order to save our own lives, therefore do I believe we might be warranted in doing it."

This was not a very pleasant conversation for Skinny, as can well be imagined. After looking at me sharply as if to learn from the expression on my face whether I would really dare carry out the threat, he fell silent, and we two sat there facing each other, I ready to spring upon him at the first move he should make giving token that he was counting on trying to escape, and meanwhile counting the seconds as they passed, com-



"I COULD KILL YOU AND NOT CALL IT MURDER."

plaining to myself because young Chris had left me thus alone.

I was not overly eager to have the son of the baker as companion that we might converse on pleasant subjects, for the time had gone by when I could make cheery talk with anyone, at least, until after I was out of this hobble; but it seemed that two of us should be on guard, if peradventure it became necessary for one to go outside, and I dare venture to say that just then I felt quite as timorous and fearful of the future as did the prisoner.

How long we two remained there alone I am unable to say; but certain it is that it seemed to me as if a full day had passed before I heard those sounds which betokened the coming of a friend, for a friend it must be who approached us boldly, since I was firmly convinced that the secret of our hiding place had not been discovered.

It was Jeremy, good, faithful Jeremy, who went about whatsoever he had to do in a business-like manner, wasting no time, not eager to win for himself the applause of others; but ever striving to do with all his might that which was set him as a task whether in behalf of his friends or himself.

The lad was literally laden with the provisions he had gathered, and said with a long-drawn breath as he shoved a bag in front of me:

"There, thankful am I that the stuff is here at last! I feared each moment to be overhauled by some of the lobster-backs who would be curious to know what I was carrying in this bag, and had come almost to believe that I should never get here."

"Did you see my mother, Jeremy?"

"Ay, that I did, Richard, and she greatly fears you have undertaken more than a lad should."

"In that she differs not greatly from myself," I said, striving to smile, but making a wry face instead. "Did she say aught concerning my coming home?"

"Only that you must look well to your own safety, and if so be there was danger in your coming to Drinker's alley, it were best you stayed away a month."

"And how about your own mother, Jeremy?"

The lad made a grimace, which told plainer than words could have done that he had met with much opposition at home when he would have returned to the lumber pile, and there was no need of explanation.

"And now, what about Chris?"

"He has taken it into his head that the time is at hand when he must gather together the company of Minute Boys, and instead of thinking of that which we have on hand, he is going here and there like a dog who seeks a bone, striving to enlist recruits."

I was literally astounded by this information. It verily seemed as if young Chris was determined to increase our troubles rather than do whatsoever he might toward lessening them.

This was no time in which to raise recruits for a company of Minute Boys, because if peradventure he should speak with one who was not inclined to join, and willing at some later date to reveal what had been said, then was the secret of our absence and the knowledge of our hiding somewhere near at hand with a prisoner, much the same as discovered.

"What shall we do, Jeremy?" I cried in despair. "It would seem that young Chris is determined to work us all the harm he may."

"Ay, so it is in my mind, Richard, and yet what is there we can do, save strive to get ourselves out of this hobble in which that villainous Skinny has plunged us, giving no heed to what young Chris may do? You understand quite as well as I, that even if we had him here this instant, and he was determined to go out seeking recruits for a company of Minute Boys, he would set off despite all you or I might say to him, so pig-headed is the lad when he takes a whim into his head."

I knew full well that Jeremy spoke no more than the truth. If my heart had been heavy before, verily it was like unto lead now, for the dangers were seemingly growing thicker about us, and I could see no way out of the mire into which we had been led by our desire to aid Master Dingley.

CHAPTER IV

THE RECRUITS

EVEN though I was so woefully distressed in mind, yet did I have a hearty appetite for that which Jeremy had brought, and Skinny showed that the fear of death was not so heavy upon him but that he could eat like a glutton, for we two fell upon the food as if we had been famished, eating like friends and enjoying every mouthful.

Meanwhile Jeremy told us of what he had seen around town, which was nothing of great importance either to the Cause or to us while we were thus mired, as you might say, with a prisoner.

After the meal had come to an end, and I am free to confess that we ate more rapidly than lads who are supposed to have had a decent bringing up should eat, we, meaning Jeremy and I, talked of this and that concerning ourselves, but never once speaking of the present situation, or of what the lobster-backs might do to us of Philadelphia in time to come.

It was as if we dared not give words to the thoughts which would come into our minds, and we therefore spoke on indifferent subjects, as if it was a relief to thus put far from us all the dangers that hung so thickly.

Because of knowing that young Chris was engaged in raising recruits for our company of Minute Boys, I had no expectation of seeing him until

perhaps another night had come, therefore was my surprise great when within two hours after Jeremy's arrival we heard the sounds of whispered voices in that passage between the timbers which led to our hiding place.

An instant later young Chris made his appearance, followed by three lads, all of whom I believed I had reason to know were friends to the Cause.

They were Harvey Norris, Sam Elder, and Timothy Bowers; good lads and true as I believed, and yet I would not have had them there at that time.

"Talk about raising a company of Minute Boys," young Chris exclaimed in a tone of triumph. "Why I could recruit a regiment in four and twenty hours, if it was necessary. Look you here! The first three I came across, and all standing ready to do whatsoever they may for the Cause, knowing that we are like to be called upon for dangerous service —"

"Do they know in what kind of a hobble we are this moment?" Jeremy asked grimly, and Tim Bowers replied as if he was thoroughly well satisfied with the situation:

"Ay, that we do, Jeremy, and if it is a case of holding Skinny Baker prisoner here during the remainder of this year, I promise faithfully not to complain at having to perform my part of guarding him."

The other lads made much the same talk; but, nevertheless, I was not easy in mind. The first that I had with which to find fault was the coming of so many into our hiding place.

It was not probable that six lads, as we now

numbered, could come in and out from beneath the lumber pile without finally attracting the attention of the lobster-backs. Once they were grown curious as to why we crawled among the timbers, the secret of our hiding place would speedily be made known, and if peradventure Skinny Baker remained at that time our prisoner, then was the whole fabric of the Minute Boys of Philadelphia come to the ground.

However, the mischief, if mischief it was, had been done, and it was useless for me to borrow trouble when there was no possibility of avoiding it. Therefore, striving as best I might to put on a pleasant face, I asked young Chris what he had learned in the city.

It appeared from his conversation that he had given no attention to anything whatsoever save the raising of recruits. In fact, he had not even considered it necessary to go home in order to relieve his mother's anxiety; but, finding these three lads ready to join in that proposition made by Master Dingley, he must needs come back to where Jeremy and I were, in order to acquaint us with what he considered his good fortune, instead of trying to make out, as I believed we should do, whether the British officers who had come upon the spy at the London Coffee-House, were yet minded to search for him.

And there was another element of danger in this work of young Chris's, which I failed to heed until after it was too late to remedy the matter.

He had, and I am free to confess that I was equally guilty, spoken of our company of Minute Boys in the presence of Skinny Baker, who, unless

he was a veritable simple, could understand all that we proposed to do.

More than this, while Sam and his comrades were telling of their willingness to do whatever might be required, the name of Master Dingley was mentioned several times, and thus was it that Skinny Baker could put together all the story of our wanderings during the night previous.

If he should succeed in making his escape, he could tell to the lobster-backs every thing of so-called treason to the king with which we were engaged, and, in addition, he had sealed the doom of Master Dingley if so be he should be captured.

Well, the mischief was done, and now were there greater reasons why Skinny must be held close prisoner, therefore it was I put the matter plainly to these new comrades who were so proud in calling themselves Minute Boys of Philadelphia, asking how we should divide our time, for it was not reasonable more than two need remain on duty at once.

Before we were well into the discussion, for a discussion did ensue owing to young Chris, who claimed that he would take sole charge of the matter, Skinny came to realize more plainly than ever before, that we counted on keeping him there so long as our safety demanded it, and he would have been a simple indeed if he did not understand that such period of time meant during the stay of the lobster-backs in our city.

"Look here," he said in a tone between a whine and a sniffle, "you fellows can't hold me a prisoner very long. You are bound to get into trouble for

what you have done already, and every hour you keep me here only makes it worse."

"Oh, we can't keep you, eh?" young Chris cried jeeringly. "Well, you will find, my fine buck, that we can hold you as long as we choose, and the way matters look at present, that will be quite a spell. In fact, I see no chance of your getting out of here until your friends, the lobster-backs, have left the city."

"The British troops left the city!" Skinny cried in alarm. "Why you must be crazy to think of such a thing! They are like to be here this many a year, for when the king has whipped you rebels as you need to be whipped, then will a force of his troops remain here to see that you don't do further mischief."

Skinny's anger had led him to give way to his temper, and the last words he spoke were very much in the nature of a threat, causing young Chris to leap upon the prisoner as if he was minded to do him bodily harm.

"Do you dare threaten us, and tell about what is to be done to rebels?" he cried, giving voice so loudly that I leaped forward, clapping my hand over his mouth, for certain it was if any had been passing the lumber pile just then they would have heard the outcry.

"You must remember where you are, Chris Ludwig!" I cried, and now it was my turn to show anger. "Are you minded to betray to any who may be near at hand our hiding place, when you know what would be the result if we were taken prisoners? Where is the harm if Skinny makes threats? That is all he can do, and, to tell the truth, I have a better liking for the cur when he

shows some bit of spirit, rather than whining like a baby as he has done since we first captured him."

Young Chris struggled to throw off my grasp, as if it was still his intent to strike the prisoner, and then it was that Jeremy took a hand in what was rapidly becoming a scrimmage, by laying hold of the lad's arm and literally dragging him back to the further end of the cave-like hiding place, saying in a tone which could not be misunderstood:

"If so be you are minded to play the fool, young Chris, then has it come time for me to get out of your company, and leave this Minute Boy association which has hardly yet been formed, for I have no desire to show myself on the scaffold, as is like to be the case if you continue in this hot-headed manner!"

But for the fact that Jeremy was not given to making vain threats, I believe young Chris would have insisted upon pummeling Skinny because of what he had said. But he knew full well that this comrade of ours did not indulge in idle words, and therefore it was he held his peace, although with very ill grace, and now was added another to the many troubles I had come upon since we first met Master Dingley.

It was Tim Bowers who attempted to straighten out matters, understanding that young Chris's ill temper might bring us all into trouble, and he said in a matter-of-fact tone:

"If so be we are to form ourselves into a company of Minute Boys, and if also we are to do such things as are like to bring our necks within a British halter, then it seems to me wise we should decide which one shall be our leader. Let us

choose a captain now, since there are six of us who are disposed to make up the company, and agree solemnly that each and every one will obey instantly any command he may give."

There was nothing more than good sense in this remark, and I had it in mind to say that Jeremy Hapgood should be chosen captain of the Minute Boys, when the lad himself spoke up:

"It is Richard Salter who shall act as captain of this company, according to my way of thinking. He it was who first had the wit to aid Master Dingley, and I believe he has sufficient of good sense to pull us through any difficulties we may get into, if so be we do as Tim has proposed and obey his every order without stopping to question."

"But I don't want to be captain; there are others here who can do it better — you yourself, for instance, Jeremy Hapgood."

Now I would not undertake to say young Chris had it in mind that he should be the commander of our company; but certain it is I noted an expression of dissatisfaction on his face, and if so be I could have trusted the lad to help us out of a tight place I would have suggested, for the sake of keeping harmony, that he be chosen leader. That much, however, I dared not do, and before it was possible for me to speak, Tim Bowers said quickly:

"I am ready to serve under Richard Salter, and to do whatsoever he may command."

So also spoke Jeremy, Sam and Harvey, young Chris holding his peace. I protested, but it was of no avail.

All save Chris were determined I should take upon myself the leadership of the company, and although I shrank from such a responsibility, it

seemed better I assume it than to throw the honor, for indeed it was an honor, aside that Master Ludwig might take it up, because I knew if the lad was allowed his head a sufficient length of time, he would bring us all into direst trouble.

After turning the matter over in my mind while one might have counted twenty, I decided upon such a course of action as would carry us through, I hoped, with safety until the morning. To this end I said to my comrades, striving the while not to put on any show of authority:

"There is no reason why all of us remain here throughout the night, and a good reason why those of us who can, should go home. Therefore it is I appoint Jeremy Hapgood and Timothy Bowers to take charge of Skinny Baker from now until morning. The rest of us are to crawl out one by one, taking due care not to be seen by the lobster-backs, and make such arrangements at home as will permit of our using the time as best we can for the benefit of the Cause. Again, it has been agreed with Master Dingley that one of us would remain near about the London Coffee-House. Because it must be a lad whom he has already seen, I propose that young Chris perform this duty. It shall be his business to loiter nearabout that place from to-morrow morning until nightfall, picking up whatever he may from the conversation of the lobster-backs, and keeping constantly on watch for Master Dingley, or whoever he may send in his stead."

It was perhaps unwise; in fact, at the moment I made such a selection, I knew that we were taking more than a few risks in giving to young Chris the post of duty at the Coffee-House. The most difficult task the lad found in life was to hold his tongue,

even when his elders were speaking, and there was real danger he might, feeling unduly important because of being chosen for the post, act or talk in such a suspicious manner as to give the Britishers cause for looking after him sharply.

"When am I to come back here?" young Chris asked as he made his preparations to depart, and I verily believe he counted on beginning his work immediately, although there was no possibility Master Dingley would send any one into the city before tomorrow at the earliest.

"You will come here only when you are sent for, or after having received some word from the spy."

"But he may not show himself for a week," young Chris said in a tone of dissatisfaction, and I replied sharply, for inasmuch as I had been chosen captain I intended to exercise the authority, mildly if I might, harshly if it became necessary:

"Then you will remain on duty there a week, unless we need you here. There is one thing positive: We must not come in and out of this hiding place oftener than may be absolutely necessary. For us to run to and fro at will is, as you yourself can see, most dangerous."

To this young Chris made no reply; but straightway crept out between the timbers and was gone, while Jeremy and I sat looking at each other questioningly, for there was in his mind much the same as that which had come into mine, concerning the possibility that young Chris's zeal and desire to show himself of importance might bring us to grief.

"I couldn't have done differently," I said in reply to the question I saw in Jeremy's eyes. "He was angry, or, I will say at least disgruntled, because you lads chose me for your captain, and it

seems to me in the highest degree important we keep him feeling fairly good natured. I do not believe young Chris would deliberately work us a harm if things went wrong; but I am afraid he might allow certain tokens of ill temper to escape him now and then, which would prove disastrous. Therefore did it seem to me best that we take the chances of putting him at the coffee-house where he can, by his ill temper, do us a bad turn, with the hope that matters may go as we would have them."

Anyone with half an eye could see that Skinny Baker was decidedly pleased because we were having so much trouble among ourselves, and he was ill advised enough to say in a sneering tone:

"Before you lads get through with this business, you will understand to your cost that it is a dangerous matter, not only to take innocent lads prisoners without rhyme or reason, but also to plot against his majesty."

I had always thought Tim Bowers a mild mannered lad; but at this moment he showed himself quite the contrary, for, moving toward Skinny in a threatening manner, he said sharply:

"If I am to have a hand in the guarding of a Tory cur like you, young Baker, bear this well in mind: That I will take no such words whatsoever from anyone. It may be cowardly to strike a prisoner, as I have heard said; but if you make further talk about plotting against his majesty, then will I give you such a drubbing as to make you wish there never had been a king in England who insisted in sticking his nose into our affairs."

I made no attempt to interfere. Tim was to be on guard during the night, and he should handle Skinny as best it pleased him.

I was burning to get home that I might talk with my mother about what we had done, and consult her regarding future movements. Therefore it was I said that I would go, and come back again before daylight. At the same time I suggested that the other two lads creep out from the hiding place, one in advance of the other, as soon as night had come.

"Be careful in leaving here, and doubly cautious when you come back," I added. "According to my way of thinking, Sam Elder, it would be a good idea for you, to-morrow, to remain near where young Chris is on duty. There is a possibility you may be able to prevent him from the shame of doing that which would work to our harm."

"I'll be there," was the prompt reply, "and although it is not in my mind to agree that I or any other lad can keep young Chris straight, you may count it as certain I will do my best."

Then it was that I shook Jeremy by the hand as if reckoning on being absent a long time. There was so much of danger surrounding us, and the lad had ever been a good friend of mine, that no one might say whether we two could come together again free, or if by chance our next meeting might be in General Howe's headquarters where we stood accused of treason.

When I set off for Drinker's alley I made it my way to pass near by the London Coffee-House, and there, sure enough, was young Chris, parading to and fro just outside the door in such a consequential manner that whosoever saw him, and took any particular note of the boy, would know he had something on hand which he believed to be of importance.

Fortunately, so I said to myself, no one would suspect a lad like him of having treasonable designs, and therefore the lobster-backs would pay little or no heed to his manner, save it might be in the way of sport.

Striving earnestly to dismiss all disagreeable thoughts from my mind, and verily if I was so inclined I could find much to cause fear and distress, I hurried on toward Drinker's alley, looking forward to the meeting with my mother as I had never before done.

I understood that, because of what I had agreed upon with Master Dingley, I might not be able to see very much of her in the future, or that before many days had passed she might fail of seeing me because of my being held prisoner, and such thoughts caused my heart to be very tender toward the one person in all the world who I knew full well loved me dearly.

Mother herself opened the door as I came up, thus showing that she must have been on the watch for me, and when she had led me up the stairs through the hallway and down again into the rear portion of the house where was the kitchen, explaining what was her purpose in thus conducting me secretly, as you might say, I understood only too well why she had been on watch.

"Jeremy Hapgood has already told me what you have agreed to do for the Cause, and although it gives me a certain degree of pride to know that a son of mine may be able to accomplish something in this work of freeing the colonies, yet am I borne down with grief and apprehension, for already have you done that which I fear must of necessity bring the British officers upon you."

"What is it you think we have done, mother?" I asked, trying to assume an innocent air lest she should understand that my heart, too, was filled with forebodings.

"What other could it be than that you have been so unwise as to make a prisoner of Benjamin Baker?" she asked as if in a tone of reproach, although I knew full well that all her heart was full of sympathy for me and that which I would do.

"Well, what if we have taken Skinny to where we kept the boat? I don't fancy he is of such importance in this city that there will be any great hue and cry raised concerning him, if he fails to go home within a certain time."

"It is there that you are making a mistake, my son, for already has the hue and cry been raised. Within the hour Master Baker himself came here to ask if you knew aught concerning his son's absence, which goes to show that he must have some suspicion you are concerned in the matter."

"I have no question but that Skinny's father and mother will both be alarmed concerning him, and sorry am I that we were forced to take the little scoundrel prisoner; but he would have it so by spying on us. Look you, mother, if we had not taken him as we did, by this time it would be known that we aided Master Dingley to escape, and you well understand what would be our fate in such an event. It was his liberty or ours, and I chose that it should be his. If so be we can keep our hiding place a secret —"

"For how long, my son? There must be an end to your holding Benjamin Baker a prisoner. What do you count on doing with him?"

"That is a matter which must be referred to Mas-

ter Dingley when next we meet him, if so be we are fortunate enough. Certain it is that Skinny cannot be allowed to go free, else we must flee the city. My greatest fear is that someone will, while young Chris is in the plot, finally come to know of our hiding place. I question much whether the lobster-backs would take any interest whatever in Skinny's absence; but surely they would look after us if he had a chance to tell them what we did in regard to Master Dingley."

"But they are already taking interest, my son. Without really playing the eavesdropper, I heard our lodgers discussing the matter this afternoon. It seems that Master Baker has been to headquarters, and while as yet you are not suspected, save perchance the lad's father himself may think you were interested in the matter in some way, it is believed by the Britishers that the appearance of the spy who was discovered in the London Coffee-House, has somewhat to do with Benjamin's unaccountable absence."

"And did you hear them say that they were deeply grieved because Skinny failed to show himself on the street?" I asked in what I intended should be a jovial tone, but down deep in my heart was I beginning to grow more timorous even than ever.

"It seems to me serious for this reason: They claimed, during the conversation which I overheard, that by seeking out Benjamin, it may be possible for them to come upon the trail of the spy who disappeared so strangely. It appears that during the day all the houses on Chestnut street were searched with the belief that he might have taken refuge in one of them. Finding that such was not

the case, they have come to believe he has a hiding place here where he can come and go at will."

During a full half-minute I stood looking blankly into my mother's face, not knowing what I could say that would calm her fears, and at the same time striving with all my will to down the timorousness which was coming over me.

"What do you count on doing with Benjamin?" my mother repeated after a long pause, and I shook my head as does one who is at a loss for words.

From the bottom of my heart I wished I might be able to tell her exactly what we *would* do with him, for verily was he rapidly becoming an elephant on our hands, and certain to bring us low if the lobster-backs were taking up the search for him.

If peradventure Jeremy Hapgood and I were the only ones concerned in the matter, then would I believe that he and I might keep the secret during so long a time that the search for Skinny would be given up; but with young Chris having a finger in the pie, and so eager to let it appear that he had important business on hand concerning the colony, or the king, or both, it seemed certain something regarding our movements must speedily leak out.

However, it was necessary I say that to my mother regarding our future plans which would ease her mind, and since we had none, I made a bluff at it by outlining what I would be pleased to do.

"If it so chances that the lobster-backs suspect us lads of aiding those who come into the city from the American army as spies, then must we flee, going to Valley Forge, and even though we may not be allowed, because of our age, to enroll ourselves as soldiers, it is necessary we stay under the

protection of our own people. When that time comes, we shall take Skinny with us."

"But you are thus counting to cut yourself off entirely from me, my son," mother said in a tone of deepest sadness. "Since your father's death you, Richard, are all I have left that makes life worth the living, and with you in the army, or, what is even worse, a camp follower, I truly believe I should die of fear and grief."

"Yet when Master Dingley made the proposition which he did, you would not have had me say nay," I cried earnestly, and she, dear soul, answered like the true woman she was:

"Of course not, my son; but what I would have had is that you had never met this Master Dingley."

"But knowing we did meet him, mother, and that it was possible for us to save his life, would you have had me turn my back upon the man, allowing him to be led to the gallows when it should please General Howe's high mightiness to hang him?"

"You have done no more, my son, than was your duty; no more than your father would have bidden you do were he on this earth. And yet even that fact does not console me, nor will it give me comfort when you are away, and I all ignorant of your whereabouts."

Well, we two talked in this strain until it was as if my heart was near to bursting. Then, striving to show myself some part of a man, I said with as much of courage as I could coax into my voice:

"Since it has all come about, mother, by chance as you might say, and because I am in a hobble from which there is no escape if I stay at home as

before this thing came about, let us put the best face we can upon it. Try to believe what seems reasonable, which is that I shall succeed in keeping out of the clutches of the lobster-backs, and that it will be possible for me to see you, if not every day, at least many times in the week. We will live in the hope that General Washington counts on leaving Valley Forge soon, to pay a visit to this city of Philadelphia."

Then it was I tried to persuade her that there was fair reason for believing our people counted on making some speedy move, bringing up as proof the fact that Master Dingley had deemed it of greatest importance word be sent out of the city to Valley Forge frequently, and arguing that unless there was some plan of attack in General Washington's mind, he would not be concerning himself regarding the lobster-backs in Philadelphia, for they were surely doing no harm to the Cause while they remained in our city idling their time away with foolish sports.

Perhaps it was because she wanted to believe all this might be true, which caused her to lend a favoring ear to my words, and after we had talked together an hour, mayhap, she seemed right cheerful in mind, going about her household duties, the chiefest of which seemed to be caring for my comfort.

Had I eaten all she set before me, then must I have died of over-feeding, for the dear woman appeared to think, because I had been away all night, that I must be well nigh famished, even though she had sent by Jeremy sufficient of food to keep a hungry boy satisfied during at least eight and forty hours.

It was not yet sunset when she insisted that I go to bed because of having remained awake all the night previous, and in truth I was willing to act upon her suggestion, for my eyelids were so heavy by the time I had been sitting in front of the kitchen fire half an hour, that I could keep them open only by the greatest exertion.

It seemed to me I had no more than lost myself in slumber, when I was awakened by mother's hand being laid gently on my cheek, at the same time that she shook me lovingly into consciousness.

I started up in alarm, for at that moment my dreams were most unpleasant, I fancying myself in the power of the lobster-backs.

When I would have cried out in fear, she placed her hand gently over my mouth as she whispered:

"Samuel Elder has come to see you, and claims it is important that he deliver a message."

"Why not let him come up here?" I asked, and she replied:

"Because all our lodgers are in the house, having with them no less than a dozen others from the Royal Irish regiment, and I fear to have them see the lad; he looks so startled and frightened that there would be good reason for them to suspect him of mischief."

"Where is he now?"

"I have left him in the shed, not daring to do otherwise, and you are to come down at once."

This last portion of my mother's speech was not needed, for on the instant she uttered Sam's name I concluded young Chris had succeeded in getting himself into some kind of a difficulty which would work to our disadvantage, and was putting on my clothes as rapidly as ever a lad could.

"Do you believe it will be necessary to go away from home again to-night?" my mother asked, and I, fearing the moment had come when I might be forced to flee for very life, replied with as much of carelessness as I could assume:

"If it should so be that I must, mother, I promise to come back within four and twenty hours, so do not fret if I go directly away with Sam Elder."

"It is useless to warn me against fretting, my son, for what mother could know that her boy was in gravest danger, as I fear you are, and not feel anxiety?"

I made no attempt to reply to this, else would the tears have come into my eyes, and she, kissing me fondly again and again, turned away as I went down the stairs toward the shed, feeling much like one who goes to the scaffold.

Fortunately, matters were not so serious as I had allowed myself to fear. At least they did not seem so at the time, for when I was come to where Sam remained half-hidden in the shed, he told me that which lifted a great burden from my heart.

Instead of waiting for the morrow before he stood watch over young Chris, it appears that shortly after I went out from the lumber pile, Sam and Jeremy decided it would be well if he had a look around in the vicinity of the London Coffee-House, and there he saw, as had I, the baker's son parading to and fro.

Sam was far too cautious a boy to go directly up to young Chris, fearing lest the lad might say something incautiously which would give an inkling of his purpose. Therefore he remained at a distance up Chestnut street, seeing nothing especial to cause alarm until he was startled by a hand being laid

upon his shoulder from behind, and, turning, he saw a stranger, who later he came to believe was none other than Master Dingley.

"Who is yonder lad?" the man asked, pointing to young Chris, and Sam, ever cautious, instead of replying asked a question in return:

"Why would you know that, sir?"

"Simply to gratify a curiosity, young master," the stranger replied laughingly, and added, "are you a friend of yonder lad?"

"Ay, that I am."

"And are you also friendly with one Richard Salter?"

"I may say that it pleases me to look upon Richard as a friend, more than it does to count young Chris as one."

"And do you know where young Master Salter is at this moment?"

"Ay, that I do."

"Can you get word to him from me?"

"To what end, sir?" Sam asked suspiciously.

"There is no reason why you should be on your guard against me," the man said with a smile, "and yet I like it well that you are. You need give me no information regarding Richard Salter; but I would have you, if so you please, take this word to him: Say that one whom he aided within the past four and twenty hours would have speech with him as soon as may be at the Jolly Tar inn."

Having said this the man turned sharply about, and Sam, believing he had but just had speech with Master Dingley, came to my home with all speed.

CHAPTER V

AT SWEDE'S FORD

I AM free to confess that I was somewhat surprised because Master Dingley had returned so soon, for I made no question but that it was he who had spoken with Sam.

All the fear which had come upon me when I was first awakened, fled, for I said to myself that the gentleman had returned, most like, to give me instructions as to what we should do in the future, for it hardly seemed possible he could have any work for us lads so soon after having made the proposition that we enroll ourselves as Minute Boys.

I questioned Sam as to what had happened in regard to the prisoner after I left, and he replied that Skinny remained as if in a fit of the sulks, speaking no word to anyone, and seemingly having resigned himself to the probable fact that he would be held prisoner until some of his friends succeeded in finding him.

"Don't let him deceive you into the belief that he remains there willingly," I said to Sam warningly. "If the cur no longer appears frightened, and is putting on meek airs, then you may set it down as a fact that he is trying to form some plan to get the best of us."

"That goes without saying," Sam replied laughingly. "Suppose either you or I were in the same hobble Skinny is? Do you not fancy we would

seek in our minds for some way to get the best of those who held us prisoner?"

"Ay; but without praising ourselves, I may say that we have more courage than he, and would show ourselves decent fellows even while fighting."

"Don't fear but that I understand he will do anything whatsoever in the way of treachery, and do you know, Richard Salter, I should not blame him overly much whatever he did, because the provocation is great."

"He had no business to stick his nose into our affairs in the first place. Then he would not be in the lumber pile guarded as he is," I replied hotly, and Sam said with a laugh:

"True enough; but he was well within his rights from his standpoint. He truly believes we are rebels past all hope of redemption, and thinks he is doing only his duty when he aids those who serve the king, even as we believe it is in aid of the Cause when we stand ready to do Master Dingley's bidding and call ourselves Minute Boys."

I could never have found it in my heart to speak words even of faint praise for such a Tory cur as Skinny Baker, yet at the same time it pleased me that Sam stood up for him in such manly fashion, and I said with a laugh:

"You may deal out all the praise possible for one like Skinny, and I will hold my peace, knowing you are a true lad and one who loves the Cause if there be any in this lobster-back ridden city of ours. Now let us make all speed for the Jolly Tar."

"I am not minded to go with you," Sam replied quickly, and when I asked him why not, he declared there was no good reason why we two should remain together in public; that it were better he

went back to the hiding place with Jeremy, where he might be needed, and adding that if peradventure it became necessary, I would visit the lumber pile sometime during the night; if not, they should expect me reasonably early next morning.

"Even though there be no good reason why you come to us," Sam added earnestly, "remember that we shall be eager to know what business Master Dingley has, and therefore I beg you to put us out of suspense as soon as it may be safely done."

Then Sam hastened away, and I turned my steps in the direction of the Jolly Tar inn, wondering not a little whether Master Dingley found in the host a man who favored the Cause. To me the keeper of that tavern was a most surly brute, who surely had no friends among those people whom I knew, and I could not fancy he was of the kind to make a confidant of anyone.

He was standing in the tap-room of the inn when I entered, and seemingly there was none other on the premises, for he asked in an ordinary tone of voice, as if there was no need for secrecy in the matter, whether my name was Richard Salter.

As a matter of course, I told him it was, and straightway, without parley, he led me upstairs into a small chamber at the rear of the house, where, instead of finding Master Dingley, I came upon a man who was an entire stranger — one whom I had never seen before.

On the instant there came into my mind the fear that some treachery had been done; that those who favored the king had taken this means of getting from me information as to what we had done the night previous.

All such suspicions fled from my mind, however,

when the man spoke, for he said, tapping me on the shoulder in a most friendly manner:

"I am sorry that Dingley decided to call upon such lads as you for aid, because this work which we would do has in it far too much of danger for us to lead boys into a road which may end only at the gallows. However, he has done so, and now am I come to ask if you can go this night to Swede's Ford?"

"I go to Swede's Ford?" I repeated like a simple, and in amazement.

"Ay, lad; there is reason for your visit, and no need why I should explain. I am come to stay in this city a few days, and when you have been to Swede's Ford and returned, if so be you desire to have speech with me, come to this inn, and, speaking only to the landlord, say that you would talk with the Weaver of Germantown."

"And why may it be that I should need to have speech with you, sir?" I asked curiously.

"After you have visited Swede's Ford you will know better, lad. Where are your comrades?"

"Nearabout, sir; somewhere within the city," I replied, suspicion again coming into my mind that this stranger might be trying to force from me a secret with a view of doing us harm.

The reply seemed to please him, for he said, again tapping me on the shoulder:

"Such caution is well, lad, in these times, and I am glad to see that you understand it. I asked the question only from a spirit of curiosity, and it is better, perhaps, that you do not answer. However, you will say to them, wherever they may be, that if during your absence any danger menaces, either to themselves or to our people at Valley Forge, they

are to come here and have speech with me even as I explained to you how it should be done."

"But what am I to do at Swede's Ford?" I asked almost impatiently, for this journey was not to my liking, and the stranger answered in what was much to me like a riddle:

"That you will find out once you are arrived there. Take no heed as to why you are going, but simply present yourself at Swede's Ford anywhere to-morrow morning after daylight, and the remainder will be told you."

"The remainder will be told me," I repeated to myself, dazed rather than otherwise by this proposition.

Certain it was that the man who was representing Master Dingley's interest was quite as careful in his way as I had shown myself to be in mine. Here he was proposing that I go on a visit which was not without some danger, because there was the risk of being overhauled by the lobster-backs before I could get there, and even going so far in his caution as to fail of giving me any inkling of that which I was to do.

It was evident that the stranger read, from the expression on my face, that I was not overly well pleased at thus being forced to set off blindfold as you might say, and he hastened to add:

"Be not vexed, lad, because I fail of explaining matters at the outset. It is well you should not know, for if peradventure you were taken by the Britishers, then would it be impossible to inadvertently reveal the secret. You are simply to go to Swede's Ford, lounge about there as if you had no particular business, and straightway someone will accost you, asking if you have been sent by the

Weaver of Germantown. Then may you know that he is one to be trusted, and follow his instructions."

"Am I to go alone, sir?"

"That is as you may please. If so be you have an idea that with a companion you could more readily explain that you had set off simply on a pleasure jaunt, or in regard to family matters, take whomsoever you choose. In fact, the orders from Master Dingley were that he believed you to be a boy of considerable parts, and one who might be safely trusted, without definite instructions, to pull through whatsoever he attempted."

I questioned at the moment whether Master Dingley had said anything of the kind; but rather fancied that this man, believing I was somewhat disgruntled, counted to flatter me so I might the more willingly set off on such a blind chase.

I made no reply to him; but waited until he should speak again, and mayhap sixty seconds passed in silence, whereupon I said with a half laugh:

"Perhaps it is your idea that there is nothing more to be said?"

"That is exactly it, my lad. Too free a use of the tongue in times like these, even between sworn friends, is inclined to danger; therefore, we who are called rebels had best hold as little converse as may be, although within the walls of this inn, so far as Master Targe, the landlord, can arrange matters, we are safe to speak our minds, yet there is no good reason why it should be done at all times. Leave the city whensoever it pleases you, so that you may arrive at Swede's Ford reasonably early to-morrow morning."

Then he opened the door, which was surely invi-

tation enough for me to go, and I went, turning the matter over in my mind as I passed through the passageway leading to the tap-room, and from thence out on the street.

Master Targe was standing just outside his door as I went by him, and he looked at me so earnestly that I could not but fancy something was in the wind, therefore halted sufficiently long to ask if he believed he had seen me before.

"Nay, lad, I have not charged my memory with you. It may be that you have been hereabout many a time; but just now I would so fix your face in my mind that I shall recognize it amid a thousand when I see you again, for it is likely you may come here often."

Even though Master Dingley had been forced to leave Philadelphia hurriedly and secretly, it was evident he had made arrangements for whatsoever might turn up. Yet I wondered not a little why this innkeeper should so readily understand that his guests from outside the city would be needing or asking for the services of boys, although there were many reasons why I might believe that the stranger whom I just left had explained matters.

Yet, and I asked myself this more than once, how had Master Dingley had opportunity since we parted with him at the Falls of the Schuylkill, to make any arrangements with another?

There was food for thought in such matter, and although I could not suspect the man whom I had just left, I failed utterly of making out how all this thing had been brought about to so complete an understanding in so short a time.

However, it was not for me to speculate overly much upon the matter, for if I was to obey the in-

structions given no time should be lost. If I counted on journeying to Swede's Ford, then it would require every effort in order to arrive there at an early hour next day, and I quickened my pace that I might the sooner come at the hiding place where I counted to meet only Jeremy and Sam.

To my unpleasant surprise, I found young Chris with the two who were guarding the prisoner, and because I could not let the lad understand that I was unwilling to trust him entirely, it became necessary, in order to explain to Jeremy and Sam that I was going out of town, for me to tell the whole story in young Chris's presence.

This I did without seeming to hesitate, for the baker's son was a suspicious lad, and it did not require many odd actions or chance words to arouse his anger.

Before I had well begun the story young Chris flew into a passion, and cried out angrily:

"If I was sent to the Royal Coffee-House to wait for whosoever might come in search of us, why did Sam Elder go there also? And if he was there by accident, why did he not report to me that someone had come who would have speech with you, Richard Salter?"

Sam would have replied, and probably with considerable temper, if I could judge by the expression on his face; but when I motioned for him to remain silent, he obeyed, and I replied to the angry Chris:

"It is not an overly safe matter in the work we propose to do, bandying words back and forth, especially in public. Sam had received the message, and there was less danger if he came directly to me, than if he waited to explain to you all that occurred, at the risk of being overheard. Why should you be

disgruntled because by chance he was able to do a portion of the work which had been set for you?"

"That is exactly why I am disgruntled. The work was for me and not for him. If he interfered, I should have been informed."

"At the expense of having the secret made known?" Jeremy asked grimly, and young Chris cried in a rage:

"Ay, at every risk, for I was the one who remained on duty."

Then I believed had come the time when I must assert my authority as commander of the Minute Boys, and I said with as much of sternness as I could call up, striving at the same time to show somewhat of friendliness in my tones:

"You must remember, young Chris, that this work is for all of us, and not for one individual. If it so chance I have set out on some matter, and you can do it more safely or quickly, then it were worse than folly for me to complain. Our only purpose in banding ourselves together as Minute Boys is to benefit the Cause, and not simply that one or another may gain glory."

I believe that young Chris was secretly ashamed of having shown himself so foolish, for he said in a tone of sulkiness:

"I am only complaining because of being set about a task and then having another lad hoisted over my head."

"No one was hoisted over your head, Chris. It so chanced that Sam was there, and the man spoke to him. He also was a considerable distance up Chestnut street — not at your post of duty. What folly it would have been for him to circle around

the coffee-house, rather than coming directly to me."

"And I suppose you count on starting for Swede's Ford at once?"

"I certainly do. It is necessary I be there early to-morrow morning, and I believe it will be well for me to go as far as the falls in the *Jolly Rover,* since there is less likelihood in such course of being overhauled by the lobster-backs."

"Why should you gain all the credit of this work?" young Chris asked, still in a sulky tone, whereupon I replied sharply:

"It is not certain there will be any credit attached to it; but far more likely, as I figure the matter, that the one who goes will encounter no little danger before he has got back to Philadelphia. Even though the lobster-backs do not interfere, I am of the opinion that those who would have us aid them will count that we have only done our duty. So far as gaining glory in this work is concerned, if that be what you are after, young Chris, there is every chance you will be sadly disappointed."

"But why should you go alone?" Chris demanded.

"And why should I not?" I asked, now very nearly losing my temper.

"Because two will be necessary if you are to go as far as the falls in the *Jolly Rover,* and if there is no longer need for me to stay on duty nearabout the coffee-house, then I am of a mind to go with you."

Now it was by no means to my liking that young Chris should bear me company on this mission, whatever it might be, for, as I have already said,

he was not a lad who could be depended upon to keep his temper, or to be prudent, in a time of danger.

Yet the thought flashed quickly through my mind even while he was speaking, that if I should allow the lad to go with me, then was I removing him from all opportunity of doing harm to those who were guarding Skinny.

Straightway, without apparent hesitation, I said to him heartily:

"If so be you are inclined to go, young Chris, I see no reason why it shouldn't be done. I shall be pleased to have company and aid in working the *Jolly Rover,* therefore, if you count on going home to explain that you may be absent some time, make all possible haste, for I would like to be on the journey before another hour goes by."

Young Chris hesitated as if it was in his mind to set off without allowing his parents to know where he went; but when Jeremy suggested that the work which we would be called upon to do by those who awaited us at Swede's Ford might keep us from the city several days, he concluded to so far save his mother from anxiety as to let her know that he intended to go away.

It would have been better for Chris, I thought then and have always believed since, if his parents had ever held him to a rigid accounting of his time. But since the day I first knew the lad, he seemed free to go or come as he pleased without regard to any person or thing.

I believe the fact of my willingness to have young Chris accompany me to Swede's Ford surprised him, for he looked as if dazed for an instant, and then went out from the hiding place with more of

caution and less noisily than I had ever known him to go before.

"If I was going away on a mission concerning which I knew nothing whatsoever, young Chris, although devoted to the Cause, is not the lad I would choose for a companion." Jeremy Hapgood said, speaking slowly as if reaching out in his mind for all the possibilities of danger that might come to me while in young Chris's company.

I made reply in what might have been a sorrowful tone, for I was indeed disappointed that he was to be my companion:

"It is better he go with me than that he stay, for there is such a whirl in his mind regarding our company of Minute Boys and the possibility of what they may do, that he will be prone to carelessness, and might bring trouble upon you who are tied here."

"Why should they be tied here?" Skinny Baker cried suddenly and hotly. "Why not do as decent lads would, and take my word that I will never reveal anything I have seen or heard since you went up the river with the stranger?"

"The reason why we don't do it, Skinny," Sam Elder said grimly, "is because your word is not worth a straw. I have known you ready to lie in small matters when no good could be accomplished by it, and surely if we were simples enough to let you go free, for the sake of revenge you would break the most solemn oath."

Then it was that Skinny, for the first time since we had made him prisoner, flew into a veritable rage, and it became necessary Jeremy and Sam should literally hold him by the arms, else would he have striven to force his way out, while, save that

I clapped my hand over his mouth, the Tory cur must have screamed aloud for help.

"You are bound to gag him!" I cried in alarm.

Really there was every danger he would arouse the neighborhood, for no one could say who might be passing near at hand, and such a noise as we were then making must of necessity attract attention.

This proposition frightened Skinny more than any threat would have done, for straightway he calmed himself, and said in an imploring tone:

"Don't gag me! I promise faithfully to hold my peace! It will be barbarous to force my jaws apart during such time as I must stay here! Suppose one of you lads were in my place, do you think it possible you could sit here with a smile on your face, and never make a move toward trying to escape?"

"No, Skinny," Jeremy replied gravely. "I am quite certain any of us would make a greater disturbance than you are creating. But we must, as would you, protect ourselves. Therefore the next time you raise your voice with the idea of attracting attention from the outside, I pledge my word that you shall be gagged in such fashion that your jaws will not come together within three or four inches, and thus shall you remain, save at such times as we are pleased to take the gag out to save you from being choked to death."

"We two will stay on duty all the time you are away, Richard," Sam Elder said as if thinking I needed heartening, as indeed I did. "Go about your work at Swede's Ford without fear for us, and howsoever long you may remain absent, it will only

be necessary for you to come here in order to find Skinny, as well as Jeremy and me."

Young Chris returned just at that instant, and I was not able to say privately to my comrades that which I was counting on doing, for, as I have already repeated again and again, I did not have sufficient confidence in Master Ludwig's son to let him share all my thoughts. And this not because there was any fear he had a leaning to the side of the king; but on account of his recklessness.

Young Chris announced that he had spoken with his father, telling him all that had occurred, and anyone who was acquainted with baker Ludwig, knew him to be such a thorough friend of the colonies that if his son could do whatsoever to aid the Cause, there would be no hindrance from him.

Chris had come with full permission to remain away as long as might be necessary, and, what was more to the purpose, had no less than seven shillings in his pocket in addition to a generous supply of bread and meat, enough to serve us, even though we should be hungry all the time, at least eight and forty hours.

After the lad had displayed his riches, and they were riches indeed to us boys who were in the hiding place, for never in my life had I had more than sixpence at a time, while I knew full well Jeremy and Sam had hardly seen as much money in the whole course of their lives, we set off without delay.

On leaving the hiding place one crawled out considerably in advance of the other, and when we were in the open, strove to move in a careless man-

ner as if we had little heed whether we went this way or that.

Twice did we come upon a squad of lobster-backs who were patrolling the streets to make certain the rebels of Philadelphia kept snugly under cover, lest they be tempted to say something disrespectful of his majesty.

Each time we came upon the Britishers did young Chris save us from being marched to the guard-house, for all the lobster-backs were acquainted with Ludwig the baker, although they did not know him for a friend to the Cause, and his son might do almost as much without reproach from them, as if he had for sire the rankest Tory in the city.

This poor attempt of mine at story-telling would be the more entertaining if I could set down that we had this or that desperate adventure while making our way across the city, and yet truth demands that I must say we went our way as peacefully as though the king's troops had never been within a thousand miles of Philadelphia.

Save in the two cases which I have already mentioned, we were not molested in the slightest degree, and even the meeting with the lobster-backs, thanks to young Chris, was nothing more than a pleasure as you might say, for it gave me no little delight to see them so ready to let us pass when we were engaged in that work which was to them a crime well worthy of death.

We went straight across the city until coming to the river, and there found the *Jolly Rover* amid the thicket just as we had left her.

There was nothing to prevent our setting off at once, and within half an hour from the time we had left the lumber pile, we were pulling up stream

in a leisurely fashion as if simply bent on sport.

We arrived at the falls without having met anyone to dispute our passage, and, leaving there the *Jolly Rover* hidden securely, set off on foot for Swede's Ford, walking with such purpose that the sun had not shown himself for more than two hours when we were at the journey's end, looking anxiously around for whosoever was to greet us.

As a matter of course, young Chris and I had very much to say to each other during the tramp, for it was not reasonable to suppose two lads would walk throughout the entire night without holding converse; but that of which we spoke has no concern whatsoever with this attempt of mine to set down the doings of the Minute Boys.

It needs only to be said that more than once did I, in as delicate a way as possible, strive to convince my comrade he must exercise more caution both in speech and movement, if we were to do anything whatsoever in aid of the colonies.

And now a word regarding this place where we had arrived, and which was hardly more than a wilderness, save for the breastworks that had been thrown up some time since by order of General Washington, to prevent the Britishers from crossing the river.

There was also the farm-house which had been built by a man named John Bull, who was a stanch Whig, and because of this so-called crime, the Britishers under General Howe, when they marched to Philadelphia the year previous, burned his barn for him.

The ruins were yet there, of course; but the house was occupied, or we judged it to be from the signs of life which could be seen roundabout, prob-

ably by the farmer's family who had no other place of shelter, save they went into that city which was held by their enemies.

There were in the breastworks mayhap twenty men, who were lounging about as if having no other aim in life than to take their pleasure, and I fancied they looked at us curiously, perhaps in an unfriendly manner, therefore it was I suggested to young Chris that we remain at a distance on the bank of the stream, rather than be questioned concerning what we could not answer even though disposed to make public all our doings.

We walked to and fro on the shore striving to avoid more than ordinary attention, at the same time that we kept ourselves in view of whomsoever counted on coming to meet us, and during all the while, as you can well fancy, both of us speculated as to why we had been sent to such a lonely place.

If word had come that we were to present ourselves at Valley Forge, where was the commander-in-chief, then might I have understood somewhat concerning the reason. But why we were to come here in the woods, as you might say, was past my guessing.

In later days, however, I came to realize that he who takes upon himself such work as we were then striving to do, must not question the whys and wherefores; but obey blindly every order which is given, and do it promptly.

When half an hour had passed and no one appeared, young Chris began to lose his patience, and a stranger might have supposed, to hear him talk, that we two lads were of great consequence in this war against the king, for he announced angrily that if those persons who had sent for us did not ap-

"THIS, GENERAL VARNUM, IS RICHARD SALTER."

pear within thirty minutes, he would go away, leaving them to do their business as best they might.

All this was foolish, as a matter of course, and I made to it no reply, thus allowing the lad to quiet down a bit. At the end of another half-hour he had thrown himself upon the ground, making ready to go to sleep, when I saw in the distance one whom I recognized as Master Dingley, and with him a man in the uniform of our army, evidently a superior officer.

The two came directly to where we were standing, and Master Dingley, taking me by the hand as if I had been a particular friend of his, said in a manner that nearly caused my cheeks to flush with shame because such praise was not warranted:

"This, General Varnum, is Richard Salter, son of a widow who keeps a lodging house in Drinker's alley, where no less a person than Major Simcoe is wont to frequent. He is a lad, as I know by careful inquiry, who may be fully trusted, and I believe will do whatsoever you have with which to entrust him."

General Varnum, who was a mild-spoken man, and not such an one as I had fancied would be chosen to lead a large number of men into battle, asked many questions concerning my life in the city since the British had taken possession, and particularly did he inquire concerning my home, and in what part of the building the Britishers lodged. He was curious to learn whether I heard any conversation between them, or if they spoke guardedly when any of my mother's family were near at hand.

I cannot undertake to set down all of which we spoke, for a great deal of it seemed to me have no connection whatsoever with the Cause. It appeared

as if he was gratifying his curiosity, rather than endeavoring to gain information.

But when he was come to an end of his questioning, and during all this time no attention whatsoever had been paid to young Chris, who lay upon the grass kicking up his heels in evident displeasure, the general said to Master Dingley:

"It is well. You may entrust the lad with the mission, Josiah; but first make certain if his comrade is to be relied upon."

At this young Chris sprang to his feet as if to make some angry reply, and I verily believe he would have given way to his ill temper even in the presence of the general, had I not caught him quickly by the arm, looking into his eyes in such a manner as was much the same as if I had bidden him hold his peace.

Then the general walked away, and Master Dingley turned to young Chris, saying to me meanwhile:

"Who is this comrade of yours?"

"The son of Christopher Ludwig, the baker," I made haste to reply. "And surely knowing the father, you can have full faith in the son's willingness to do whatsoever you have for his hand."

"Is there any reason why you lads may not linger here four and twenty hours?" Master Dingley asked.

I told him we were at his service, yet secretly hoped he would not keep us in that desolate place long.

"Is your company of Minute Boys already formed?" Master Dingley asked, and straightway young Chris's tongue was loosened as he told of what he himself had done in the way of raising re-

cruits, speaking so boastingly, that one who did not know him might come to believe we had a large number of lads ready to serve the Cause in whatsoever way they might.

I took it upon myself to explain how many had joined the company, and who they were, whereupon Master Dingley said:

"The work which the commander-in-chief would have you do is such as requires more than ordinary caution, and of so delicate a nature that General Varnum, who is entrusted with that part of the scheme, was not willing you should be informed of what was on foot until he had had speech with you. Therefore it was I asked that you come here to this place, rather than at Valley Forge."

"And are we not to see the American camp?" young Chris asked eagerly.

"Now that General Varnum is satisfied regarding you two, I see no reason why you may not go into camp this night, if so be you are willing to tramp over a rough bit of country."

"We would tramp from here to New York and back again, for the sake of seeing the army!" I cried excitedly, for my one desire throughout all the long winter had been to see how our brave fellows bore up under the privations of which we had but faint idea.

"Very well; we will set off at once," Master Dingley replied.

And so we did. But nothing was seen of General Varnum, and before we had gone a mile I learned that he had ridden down to within a short distance of Swede's Ford on horseback, where he met Master Dingley, and was now returning in the same manner.

And now comes what at that time was to me a great mystery. We traveled leisurely along, talking of this thing and of that concerning the struggles which our people were making against the king's rule, and with no fear that anyone was near to overhear our words, yet never once did Master Dingley speak concerning the mission which he would send us on, and for which we had come so far.

It was as if he had entirely forgotten we had been summoned for some especial purpose, and believed his sole duty was to escort us to the American camp.

Again and again was I tempted to ask why we had been called to Swede's Ford; but each time my heart failed me. Then I said to myself that I would restrain my curiosity, come what might, never hinting that I was eager to learn of his purpose, and waiting with whatsoever patience I could until it pleased him to explain matters.

CHAPTER VI

VALLEY FORGE

Now, while we are traveling over the hills hoping speedily to cover the seven miles between Swede's Ford and Valley Forge, I burning with impatience for Master Dingley to speak concerning the business on which we had been summoned, and young Chris following sulkily in the rear, disgruntled because he had, according to his belief, not been treated with as much ceremony as he believed the son of his father should have, let me set down what at a later day I read concerning Valley Forge and our people there.

It cannot be without interest even to those who know it full well because of having suffered there, and to him who would follow my poor attempt at telling of the doings of our Minute Boys of Philadelphia, it seems necessary many things should be known concerning this winter encampment where was so much of suffering.

It is perhaps needless for me to say that our army arrived at Valley Forge on the nineteenth day of December in the year 1777, and there at once began the work of building such shelters as would serve in some slight degree to shield them from the cruel weather.

I myself have seen the written orders which General Washington gave concerning the making of

the huts. He directed the commanding officers of regiments to have their men divided into parties of twelve, to see to it each company had its proportion of tools, and that they build a hut for that number.

In order to quicken their movements, for General Washington knew how necessary it was these shelters should be erected without delay, he promised to give the party in each regiment which finished its hut the soonest and in the most workmanlike manner, a present of twelve dollars. He also offered a reward of one hundred dollars to the officer or soldier who would substitute a covering for the huts, cheaper and more quickly made than boards.

These are the directions which he gave concerning the size and style of the building: "Fourteen feet by sixteen each; the sides, end and roofs made with logs; the roofs made tight with split slabs, or some other way; the sides made tight with clay; a fireplace made of wood and secured with clay on the inside eighteen inches thick; this fireplace to be in the rear of the hut; the door to be in the end next the street; the doors to be made of split oak slabs unless boards can be procured; the side walls to be six feet and a half high. The officers' huts are to form a line in the rear of the troops, one hut to be allowed to each general officer; one to the staff of each brigade; one to the field officers of each regiment; one to the staff of each regiment; one to the commissioned officers of two companies; and one to every twelve non-commissioned officers and soldiers."

Do you remember that pitiful letter which Washington wrote to Governor Clinton about the middle of February, wherein he said:

"For some days past there has been little less than a famine in the camp. A part of the army has been a week without any kind of flesh, and the rest three or four days. Naked and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been, ere this, excited by their sufferings to a general mutiny and desertion."

Now I have heard it said that when the army first went into camp there were eleven thousand and ninety-eight men, but of this number two thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight were unfit for duty. The British army encamped in comfort, almost luxury, in our land of America, numbered thirty-three thousand, seven hundred and fifty-six, and nineteen thousand, five hundred and thirty of these were in our city of Philadelphia, afraid to move in either direction save when they sent out squads now and then to inflict damage upon the people near by.

More than once had I heard Major Simcoe speak of our people under arms as the "Rag-tag and bobtail," and yet that same rag-tag and bobtail were keeping the lobster-backs shut up in Philadelphia, while they were in the condition which General Varnum described to General Green when he wrote to him on the twelfth of February, which same letter I also have seen, as has young Chris, in which he says:

"The situation of the camp is such that in all human probability the army must dissolve. Many of the troops are destitute of meat and are several days in arrears. The horses are dying for want of forage. The country in the vicinity of the camp is exhausted. There cannot be a moral certainty of bettering our condition while we remain here."

And before this day on which Chris and I were visiting Valley Forge, Master Dingley told us that again and again was it almost impossible to find soldiers in condition fit to discharge the military camp duties from day to day. That those who were naked, and there were very many who were almost the same as without clothing, borrowed from those who had clothes, while they went out to stand guard or do such other duties as were required. And when he said this, Master Dingley added proudly:

"Yet, amid all this suffering day after day, surrounded by frost and snow (for it has been a winter of great severity), patriotism is still warm and hopeful in the hearts of the soldiers, and their love of self is merged into the one holy sentiment of love for country."

If I had been lukewarm regarding the Cause up to this day when we were traveling over the hills with Master Dingley, I should have burned, as I really did then, to have my part of the sufferings which these men were enduring.

I felt more keenly than ever how small and pitiful it was for young Chris and me to complain because we had been asked to walk a few miles into the country, to the end that we might be able to do something in the behalf of our people, when those brave fellows were suffering bitterly, so we could teach the king a lesson which he sorely needed.

Perhaps it is not well for me to set down so plainly the sufferings of our soldiers at Valley Forge, and yet why should they not be made known in order that all who come after us may the better understand at what cost we of the colonies were fighting against the king's troops, who swarmed over

the land like as locusts, devouring everything that could be come at?

I was ashamed that I had been living in Philadelphia with plenty of food and ample shelter. Ashamed that I had not known better concerning this suffering at Valley Forge, so I might have been all the more eager to do whatsoever lay within my power.

I was yet reproaching myself because thus far I had not shared in the distress of our people who were serving the Cause, when we came within sight of the encampment lying in the valley and along the sides of the hill, and then it was that suddenly, as if just remembering why we had come there, Master Dingley said:

"Now then, lads, sit ye down where it will be possible to see our brave fellows who are waiting an opportunity to fall upon the lobster-backs, and you shall hear what I would have you do in your own city of Philadelphia, promising, however, that there are many chances you may not be allowed to finish the work, because if so be the Britishers have an inkling of what you are about, your shrift will be short."

Then it was I suddenly remembered that Master Dingley was all ignorant of the fact that we had taken Skinny Baker prisoner.

It may seem strange I should have forgotten such an important fact; but the reason of my not speaking with him regarding it was, that up to this time he had made no inquiries concerning our movements in Philadelphia, save as to what we had done in the way of raising recruits for the Minute Boys.

Then, when he seemed to be on the point of telling

us why we had been called to Swede's Ford, I made bold to say:

"There is one thing, perhaps, which you should know before explaining the purpose for which you sent to us. After leaving you, and getting nearly home again, we found that the son of a Tory, one Benjamin Baker, had not only seen us in your company; but knew that we had taken you up the river. There seemed to be but one thing to do, which was to keep the fellow safe where he could not tell the lobster-backs what he had discovered, and the result of it all is that we are holding him captive in that place where our boat was hidden."

"And you have a prisoner on your hands?" Master Dingley cried as if in dismay, whereupon young Chris said boldly:

"Ay, how else could we do? The lad was certain to have told his story to the first lobster-back he met, and if peradventure the soldiers did not believe him, his father is of sufficient influence to obtain an interview even with General Howe. It was his liberty or ours."

"Ay, I can see that much, and yet there is great danger, as it appears to me, for you thus to hold him in hiding. Of a surety his father will make search for the lad."

"He has already done so, and yet if our comrades are cautious, holding themselves well under cover without venturing out more than is absolutely necessary, I fail to see how Master Baker can come upon his son," I replied.

Master Dingley remained silent while one might have counted twenty, and then he asked suddenly:

"Did you tell the Weaver of Germantown that you had a Tory lad in your keeping?"

"That we did not, sir," I replied.

"Why not?"

"I was not overly certain that he who called himself the Weaver of Germantown was a true friend to the Cause. I had only his word for it, and there was no reason why I should give him more of my affairs than was absolutely necessary."

"The caution does you credit, lad, yet I would he knew of it, for it might make some difference in his movements."

"It can't be helped now," young Chris said lightly, as if not considering the matter of any great importance. "We have got Skinny, and must hold him so long as we count on staying in Philadelphia, for no one who knows him would be willing to take his word on any matter whatsoever, and certain it is he would betray us to the lobster-backs gleefully, however he might swear to the contrary."

"And one could hardly blame him if he did," Master Dingley said grimly, after which he fell silent again.

We two lads sat watching him a full minute, mayhap, when he straightened up as does one who would throw off some disagreeable thought, and said with a long-drawn breath that was much like a sigh:

"What has been done, has been done, and we must make the best of that which seems to me a dangerous matter, for it is hardly possible you can keep the lad prisoner within a lumber pile many days. However, what comes of that is no affair of ours just at this time. It remains for me to tell you why, and how, you can be of service to the Cause, lads though you are."

Now it was I pricked up my ears, for at last, after what had seemed to be an exceeding long time

of waiting, we were to learn why we had been summoned.

"First let me ask if you have heard in the city aught concerning a change of British commanders?"

"No, sir, although my mother did say shortly before we met you, that she heard Major Simcoe speaking somewhat concerning a change; but what it was she failed to catch."

"Well, lads, we have from reliable authority that General Howe is to be replaced in command by General Henry Clinton; but whether that be good news or ill, remains to be seen. Now, however, I have to tell you what I question if even the enemy in Philadelphia are yet aware. It concerns our affairs with France. That country has acknowledged the independence of our colonies, and entered into a treaty with us, which is much the same as saying that she will stand our friend during the remainder of this war. Such news came to us six days ago, which is as if I had said on the first of May, and to-morrow there will be rejoicings in this army here at Valley Forge. Therefore I would have you see and hear what takes place, to the end that you may tell those of our friends in Philadelphia whom you can trust, so if peradventure they be weak-kneed in the Cause it will strengthen them wondrously. It was for that reason you were asked to come here; but rather than saying you should journey directly to this place, General Varnum insisted that first he must have speech with you to learn if — and now I am speaking particularly to Richard Salter — he and his mother could be depended upon to spread the news in such manner that the telling of it might not bring them into trouble."

I was becoming confused. I had believed we had

been sent for because of yet greater troubles to the colonies, and now it seemed that instead of venturing our lives in the Cause, we were simply to be the bearers of good tidings, after having witnessed a celebration by those men who had suffered so much during the winter.

"Here is a copy of general orders which have been issued by the commander-in-chief, and I would have you lads read it carefully, to the end that you shall remember it even after you are men grown, for to my mind this marks an era in our struggle for independence which promises, for the first time since we arrayed ourselves against the king, that we may be reasonably certain of accomplishing our purpose."

Then Master Dingley took from his coat a folded paper which he handed me, insisting that I read it aloud, and so I did.

Even to this day can I remember the words, so deeply were they then impressed upon my memory, and I am setting each one down, hoping it may be possible for me to put them exactly in that order as I read while we were sitting upon the ground overlooking the camp at Valley Forge.

"It having pleased the Almighty Ruler of the universe to defend the Cause of the United American States, and finally to raise us up a powerful friend among the princes of the earth, to establish our liberty and independence upon a lasting foundation, it becomes us to set apart a day for gratefully acknowledging the divine goodness, and celebrating the important event, which we owe to His divine interposition. The several brigades are to be assembled for this purpose at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, when their chaplains will communicate the

intelligence contained in the postscript of the Pennsylvania Gazette of the 2nd instant, and offer up a thanksgiving, and deliver a discourse suitable to the occasion. At half-past ten o'clock a cannon will be fired, which is to be a signal for the men to be under arms; the brigade inspectors will then inspect their dress and arms, and form the battalions according to the instructions given them, and announce to the commanding officers of the brigade that the battalions are formed.

"The commanders of brigades will then appoint a field officer to the battalions, after which each battalion will be ordered to load and ground their arms. At half-past eleven a second cannon will be fired as a signal for the march; upon which the several brigades will begin their march by wheeling to the right by platoons, and proceed by the nearest way to the left of their ground by the new position. This will be pointed out by the brigade inspectors. A third signal will then be given, on which there will be a discharge of thirteen cannon; after which a running fire of the infantry will begin on the right of Woodford's, and continue throughout the front line; it will then be taken up on the left of the second line, and continue to the right. Upon a signal given, the whole army will huzza, Long live the King of France! The artillery then begins again, and fires thirteen rounds; this will be succeeded by a second general discharge of the musketry in a running fire, and huzza, Long live the friendly European powers! The last discharge of thirteen pieces of artillery will be given, followed by a general running fire, and huzza, The American States!"

"It will be a fine celebration!" young Chris said excitedly, thinking more of what was to be done

in the way of making a noise, than of that which it signified.

I could not for the life of me speak, for it seemed of a verity that this was indeed the beginning of the end. And I may be pardoned if, way down in my heart, there was just the slightest feeling of regret because the war was come to an end so soon that our Minute Boys of Philadelphia might not have a chance to show the stuff which was in them; but I need not have fretted concerning that part of it.

Before many weeks I was to learn that this show of friendship on the part of the French nation had not won for us our independence; there must be yet much more bloodshed, and ample time in which we lads of Philadelphia could prove our metal.

"And it was simply that we might see this celebration you sent for us?" I said, whereupon Master Dingley smiled as one might at a foolish child, while he said in an indulgent tone:

"Nay, lad, there is yet much work to be done, as you will see. The chief question which concerns us here is, what will be General Clinton's policy once he has taken command of the troops which are in Philadelphia, and to that end has the Weaver of Germantown taken up his abode in the Jolly Tar inn, there to remain so long as the Britishers will allow. In the meanwhile, however, General Varnum believes, as do I, that two or three lads who can move about without attracting attention, may gain us certain information concerning the events of the eighteenth day of May."

"That is nearly two weeks from now!" young Chris exclaimed as if disappointed because our work was not to begin immediately, and I could not refrain from asking how it was that Master Dingley

could set so decidedly a time when we might be able to do something — how it was he knew exactly that on a certain day of May we might be of service.

"It is because on that day a grand festival is to be held under direction of General Burgoyne and Major John Andre, as a sort of farewell reception to General Howe, for before that day comes, so our information goes, General Clinton will be here. This carnival has been called by its promoters, and I believe it was Major Andre himself who gave the name, the *Mischianza,* whatever that may mean. Then it is, when the officers have given themselves over to pleasure, that you lads may pick up much concerning the possible movements of General Clinton, for it is certain considerable of that matter will be discussed at such a time. I learned, while in Philadelphia, that the carnival was to be held at Master Wharton's country seat in Southwark, and that the company will begin to assemble from three to four o'clock at Knight's wharf, when they will embark in a grand regatta. It is from that moment I count on your being able to follow them."

"Then all we are to do is go to a party at Master Wharton's, eh?" young Chris asked in a tone of discontent, and Master Dingley smiled sadly as he replied:

"If it is danger you lads are greedy for, I venture to say that you have enough of it surrounding you just now. What with the boy prisoner in the lumber pile; the knowledge that your people, meaning particularly your father, young Ludwig, are among those who love the colonies, you will stand a good chance of being brought up with a round turn to explain why you are loitering around that party

of pleasure seekers, if so be you are not exceeding cautious. Do not be over eager about running your neck into peril, for you stand near by it every moment of your life from this on."

It was in my mind that Master Dingley simply said this to pleasure us, seeing we were eager to run our noses into peril, for I failed utterly of understanding how we could get into trouble.

I had not the shadow of a fear that Skinny Baker could succeed in making his escape while Jeremy and Sam were watching over him, and in eight and forty hours at the longest I would be there to take part in guarding him.

In my folly it seemed to me that we lads, even though the Britishers did know we came of so-called rebel stock, were as safe in Philadelphia as we might be even there at Valley Forge, all of which goes to show how simple a boy can be who counts with certainty upon the future.

There was very much which Master Dingley had to say to us before we two were allowed to wander at will through the encampment.

He explained in great detail how we should set about going to this carnival with the odd name; how we must deport ourselves once there, and how best avoid attracting attention at the same time that we lingered near enough to the lobster-backs to hear some part of their conversation, speaking a great many words which seemed to me needless, because I believed the task to be so simple.

Only after he had unburdened himself in what seemed almost a tiresome fashion, did he set us free to go whithersoever we would, agreeing to meet us near General Washington's marquee, when we were wearied with sightseeing.

I felt much like a lad who is suddenly relieved from disagreeable tasks, when we were thus set free; but before young Chris and I had wandered very far amid the motley collection of huts, did my joy turn to mourning, for I saw our people in wretched condition, although later we were told that they were much improved since winter.

And the question came to my mind whether it would ever be possible for such an army, half clad, the majority of them looking as if they had just come from the hospital, and all seemingly hungry, for I fancied I could read on the face of each a desire for food, to do aught of importance against the king's men. There was little wonder the lobster-backs called them rag-tag and bobtail, or that they were not overly afraid of what the poor fellows might be able to accomplish.

I had thought it would be many a long hour ere we were ready to rejoin Master Dingley, and yet before thirty minutes had passed I was so heart-sick at the distressing sights, that I urged young Chris to come away with me where we might not see so much to offend the mind and the eye.

Although young Chris was not a sensitive lad, he was quite as deeply impressed by that which we saw as I, and willingly followed me to where Master Dingley lay on the ground awaiting our coming, as if he had no other purpose in life than minister to us.

Once we were with him again he continued to explain how we might carry out our mission, and had so many words regarding it that I was weary with the hearing, although it would not have been seemly to show displeasure, because all which the good man said was intended for our safety.

I would I might dwell upon what we saw at Valley Forge next day; but because the general order explained all that was to be done, it would be simply repeating the same matters for me to go over every incident of that day.

It is enough if I say that everything was carried out as General Washington had ordered, and we two lads sat more than patiently, listening to the sermon which was spoken by Parson Hunter, for at such a time and amid such surroundings did it seem to me as if a pious discourse was the one thing necessary to finish the sad picture.

How the ragged soldiers cheered General Washington when the last of the ceremony had come to an end, and he with his wife and the officers of his staff left the field to partake of a dinner at his headquarters — not a feast as you might well suppose, but a plain, simple meal given in token of thanksgiving, as I believed.

The men cheered him to the echo, he turning from time to time to raise his hat in acknowledgment, and then he was lost to our view, we going to Master Dingley's hut where we found of bacon and corn bread enough to satisfy our hunger, but not sufficient to encourage greediness.

It was near to nightfall by this time, for Parson Hunter's sermon had been long drawn out, although it was calculated to touch one's heart.

Then it was Master Dingley proposed we set out on our return for Philadelphia, claiming that we might travel with more safety during the night than in the daytime, and insisting that we take with us a couple of soldiers as far as Swede's Ford, lest we meet with Tories nearabout who would do us harm, for in this neighborhood of Valley Forge there were

very few, so we were told, outside the army, who favored the Cause.

I was weary and needing sleep, therefore such advice did not come in a welcome fashion; but I was soon given to understand that Master Dingley had a care to our well being, for he insisted that we first lie down in his hut and sleep two hours, after which we should set out on our return to Philadelphia.

Everything was done as Master Dingley had announced, and it was near about midnight when, arriving at Swede's Ford, we bade adieu to the soldiers who had acted as our guides — two men from Massachusetts, and right pleasant companions were they, who had suffered bitterly all the long winter, and yet were filled with hope concerning the future.

They spoke so cheeringly of what it would be possible for the American army to do once summer had come, that I was ashamed of ever having fancied we might fail in our attempt to teach the king a lesson.

Then young Chris and I set off alone, thinking to make a short journey of it; but giving so little heed to our steps that twice we went astray, and the new day was nearly half spent when we came to the falls where we had left the *Jolly Rover*.

Now it was that, fortunately, I was afflicted with a fit of timorousness, and declared to young Chris it would be in the highest degree dangerous for us to continue on during the daylight.

We knew full well that under the happiest circumstances we would meet with lobster-backs a dozen times before arriving at the place where we had left Skinny Baker, and it might not be a simple matter to convince them we were innocent of mis-

chief when they saw us coming from the direction of the American camp.

Therefore it was I insisted we should lay hidden in the thicket where the *Jolly Rover* was concealed, until night had come, and luckily young Chris fell in with my ideas, not on account of believing the danger to be great, but because slumber was so heavy upon his eyelids that he was eager to take advantage of an opportunity to sleep.

In looking back at that time and recalling why we halted at the falls instead of continuing on, I can but believe that our movements were directed by some higher power than any on earth, for had we gone straight on, as would naturally have been our inclination, then had our time of usefulness as Minute Boys come to a speedy end.

However, as it was we crawled into the thicket; ate such portion of corn bread as remained from the store with which Master Dingley provided us, and then fell asleep, counting to be on our way as soon as the sun had set.

Instead of this, however, so weary were we in body, that when I next opened my eyes it was dark. I knew by the stars it must be well to midnight, and hurriedly awakened young Chris that we might get off as speedily as possible lest another day come before we were arrived.

Because of thus over-sleeping, we did not arrive at the town until within an hour of sunrise, and then it was too late for us to pull the *Jolly Rover* around to the lumber pile. Therefore we left her where she had been hidden before, and struck straight across the city at our best pace, for it seemed absolutely necessary we come to the hiding place before it was light.

We were feeling in fine fettle as we drew near the lumber pile where we counted on meeting Jeremy and Sam, for it seemed as if fortune was favoring us in every way.

We had not come across a single red-coat in our tramp through the town, which I venture to say was owing to the early hour, for we all know that slumber weighs more heavily upon one just before morning than at any other time, and the lobster-backs were no exception to this rule.

We were come to the lumber pile just as the first tokens of the new day appeared in the eastern sky, and, there being seemingly no one in the vicinity, I said to young Chris that we might both venture to go in at the same time, instead of waiting one for another, so there would be less danger of attracting attention.

I was leading the way, and on crawling through the passage, fearing lest I should startle Jeremy and Sam, I whispered loudly before I was come to the space inside which formed our prison, that they need have no fear — that we were friends who approached.

There was no reply to these words of mine, and I was simple enough to think both the lads had fallen asleep, even though they had agreed that one should remain on watch all the time lest Skinny Baker escape.

It was dark in there as one might well fancy, and impossible even to see a fellow's hand before his face; but I crept on, counting to give Jeremy the surprise of his life by shaking him into wakefulness.

So well acquainted was I with the place that I could pick out any particular spot by sense of touch,

and went directly to the spot in which we had left Skinny, which was a sort of niche or corner, where we could the better guard him.

Then I stretched out my hand in either direction, and as I did so a cry of horror burst involuntarily from my lips, for I touched nothing save the rough timbers.

"What is the matter?" young Chris asked excitedly, pressing against me with an effort to pass, and I replied hurriedly:

"I fail to find anyone here, Chris. Crawl entirely around the place, and at once, for if anything has happened then are we like rats in a trap. It stands to reason that in case the lobster-backs have heard aught of our doings, they will be watching for our return."

We were like two lads who had suddenly lost their senses, as we crept here and there, bruising our hands upon the rough planking or joists, and passing and repassing the same place a dozen times, until when it seemed to me it must be broad daylight, the fearsome thought forced itself to my mind that our comrades had been captured.

Neither Skinny nor those who guarded him were in the hiding place, and we needed no better evidence that they had fallen into the hands of the enemy, for I knew as well as I knew anything in this world, that neither Jeremy nor Sam would have taken it upon themselves to carry the prisoner out of there, whatsoever might have occurred, during my absence.

It was at the moment as if I were standing at the foot of the gallows, with a noose made ready for my neck.

CHAPTER VII

IN MORTAL FEAR

THE horror which came upon me when I learned that our comrades and the prisoner had disappeared, and realized that they could not have vanished save through some work of the lobster-backs, was so overpowering that during three or four minutes maybe — I had no knowledge of the passing of the time — I remained silent and motionless, my hand on young Chris's shoulder as if depending upon him in some way for support.

For the first time since I had known the lad was he awed into silence. He could not have failed to understand, as did I, very much of what had happened, and realized fully the danger which menaced us.

For awhile my mind was in such a whirl that I was not capable of connected thought, and then, as the moments went by, each bringing nearer to us that peril which I believed, and almost was the same as certain, awaited us outside our hiding place, I began to gather my wits. For the first time since the terrible blow had come upon me, I understood that it behooved young Chris and me to be doing whatsoever we might to insure our safety.

And what could we do, I asked myself, clutching my comrade yet more firmly by the shoulder as if believing he, without questioning, could give me the solution to the riddle.

There was no doubt whatsoever but that the lobster-backs had heard from Skinny that we were gone on a mission to the American army, and like to return to that very place. Therefore would they keep watch for us, and that we had been able to get in there without being arrested, was due to the fact that we had come at the one time of all others during the night when those who watched would be less keenly on the alert.

"We must leave here at once," young Chris said, starting up as if he would on the instant go into the open air, and I seized the lad roughly, pulling him back until he was where I could hold him motionless, as I said:

"Have you no better sense than to go out now, when we know beyond a peradventure that there will be lobster-backs nearabout watching for us?"

"But we *must* go," young Chris cried helplessly. "To stay here is to be made prisoners."

"Ay, and to go out is to make certain of being taken into custody. There is some slight chance we may escape yet if we but hold ourselves together, striving to hit upon that which is the wisest course."

"There can be no wise course as we are situated now," the lad replied with a choking of the breath that was like unto a sob. "We are the same as taken already. Do you fancy for a single instant that Skinny would hold his peace concerning the chances of our return?"

It was as if this question of young Chris's brought to my mind a plan, a poor one it is true, and yet better than none at all, therefore I replied eagerly, thus showing that the idea had just come into my mind:

"If so be there are lobster-backs on watch for us, then must they be of the belief that we have not yet returned. How we got in here without their knowledge I know not, save that they must have slept while on duty, for I dare venture to swear one or more has been placed over this lumber pile as guard both day and night. Now we are here, and with the chance that they yet believe we are up the river, it behooves us to stay until nightfall at the very least. Between now and then shall we decide how we can best go away without attracting the attention of those who would send us to the gallows."

"And think you it will be possible, even after night has come, for us to get away from here?" the lad asked in a despairing tone, whereupon I, to hearten him rather than because I believed such matter, replied with as much of cheerfulness as I could assume:

"It is certain we got in here without being seen, else they would have nabbed us on the instant, had our approach been known. There is no chance we could escape if we ventured out in the open day, for not only would we stand a chance of being seen by those who are on guard nearby, but the odds are that the hue and cry has been raised against us, and if peradventure we showed ourselves in the city, someone would be certain to gobble us up."

"But we can't stay here all day," young Chris moaned. "Fancy sitting here eating our hearts out with fear that each instant may bring the lobster-backs upon us!"

"Ay, lad; but think of going out and being haled before a company of British officers who have

formed themselves into what is called a court martial, and have them decide whether we shall be hanged to-morrow or next day."

Young Chris made no reply; but, covering his eyes with his hands, sat with head bent on his knees, the perfect picture of despair.

Well might he present such a picture, for look upon the situation as I could, in the most favorable light, I saw but little hope of our being able to go free many hours longer.

However, it was possible, as I figured the matter in my mind, for us to remain where we were until nightfall — only possible; but yet why not take the chances of remaining alive yet a little longer? Why rush out as Chris would have me to do, into the arms of those who would judge us as spies?

I could not if I would set down all the horrible ideas which came into my mind during the long day that seemingly would never come to an end.

Each minute, full of terror as it was, appeared to have been lengthened into an hour, and the hours were like unto weeks, until it was all I could do to prevent myself from crying aloud in agony.

Chris still remained with his head on his knee when I fancied noon had come. It was as if the lad had given up all hope, and I questioned whether there might not be some difficulty in arousing him when I believed our time for action was come.

Now and then we could hear voices on the outside of the lumber pile, and these I made certain were come from those who stood on watch to seize us.

More than once did I fancy I heard someone creeping through the passageway to make certain whether we were there, and then involuntarily I

crouched back against the timbers as if I would force myself through them, straining every muscle until I felt as sore as if I had been beaten from head to foot.

We gave no thought to hunger; in fact, we were not conscious of lack of food while the mental agony was so great; but there were times when it seemed as if I would give half my chances of escape, if indeed I had any, for water enough to moisten my throat.

Fear had dried my mouth and parched my tongue until it was with difficulty I could speak, when now and then I would strive to cheer young Chris from out his terrible despondency.

However slowly the minutes moved, the day finally came to an end, as all days will whether they bring us good or evil.

While the sun was shining this hiding place of ours was lighted sufficiently for one to see another; but when evening came the darkness was so intense that it was only by the sense of touch you could determine where was your comrade, even though he sat close by your side.

I believe young Chris had remained silent and motionless a full three hours before this, and then, when we knew that the day had passed, he said in the tone of one who has lost all hope:

"When may it be to your mind that we make a change? When do you count on taking the chances of getting away from here?"

"As soon as I believe midnight has come."

"And have you any faith that we may succeed?"

"Whether I have or no, it is better we make the attempt. God has thus far been good to us, inas-

much as He has allowed that we remain here throughout the day without being discovered, and let us hope His goodness will so far continue that we may be able to get away undetected."

"And what then?" Chris asked with a groan. "Where can we go? Surely not to your home or mine, for if the hue and cry be out against us, then will the lobster-backs pay frequent visits to the bakery and your mother's house."

"Let us not cross bridges until we come to them, for of a verity we have trouble enough without looking into the future in search of more," I replied sharply, angered because he would persist in striving to find yet further cause for anxiety when we had so much upon us. "Our first work is to get away from here, and if so be we should succeed in leaving this hiding place, then let us take the chances of crossing the city once more, making our way to Valley Forge, where we know beyond a peradventure we shall be safe from the Britishers; for however greatly they outnumber our army, General Howe has not dared to give battle."

"There is as little hope we can cross the city since the hue and cry is most likely out, as that we can go straight from this place to heaven," Chris said despairingly, and once more lapsed into silence, which was irritating to me, for of a verity I needed a cheering word now and then even as much as did he.

Again and again I cast about me to decide what we should do if peradventure we succeeded in getting away from the hiding place; but without avail.

Then I fell to counting the minutes, so that I might have some fair idea of when midnight had

come, and in all these ways of making the time seem to pass more quickly, I failed because of the shadow of the scaffold which was weighting me down.

It was at the very moment when I said to myself that we might as well go out and give ourselves up at the nearest guard-house, as to make any effort toward escape, when I heard a soft rippling of the water just at the mouth of our hiding place near about where we usually moored the *Jolly Rover*.

On the instant all that spirit which had been driven out of me by the horror of the situation, came back, for I knew that that which I heard was not the lip, lip, lipping of the tide; but caused by some living thing, although it might be only an animal.

"Do you hear that?" I asked feverishly, gripping young Chris by the shoulder and pulling him toward me, as if by such change of position he might the better distinguish the sounds.

He, listening for an instant, fell back once more in helpless fear as he muttered:

"'Tis only a rat, or something of that kind. Perchance a cur which one of the lobster-backs has thrown into the water; but surely nothing that may be of avail to us, for there is no one who can help us now."

I could have pummeled the lad, so great was my irritation because he refused even to suspect that there might be some in the city who would try to aid us, and perhaps in my anger I said many bitter things to him; but I had as well have talked to a stone, so far as making myself understood was concerned, for young Chris was the same as dead to the world.

"Whether it be rat or no, I am minded to find out, for surely something is moving toward this place against the current."

Chris made no reply, and I crept softly down upon a projecting timber to which we had always moored the *Jolly Rover,* and, hardly conscious of what I did, stretched my hand out over the surface of the water, striving to feel that which was causing the ripples.

Then my heart came up into my throat like to burst the skin, as I touched the hair of a human being's head, and an instant later I was near to losing consciousness because of the wondrous joy that came over me, as I heard a familiar voice ask:

"Is that you by any good chance, Richard Salter?"

"Me? Ay, that it is, Timothy Bowers! God bless you for having come to me at this moment when I was near dead with fear!"

"Are you alone here?" and Tim, rising sufficiently out of the water to clutch the plank on which I was standing, drew himself up beside me all unaided, for I was so weakened by joy that I could not have raised a pound's weight strive however I might.

Mayhap a full minute passed before I was able to speak connectedly, and then I answered his question by saying that young Chris was near at hand.

"How did you get inside here without being seen by the lobster-backs?" he asked in amazement.

"That I know not; we came just before break of day, and saw no one nearabout. The first we knew that any trouble had befallen our lads, was

when we found this place empty. Tell me what has happened?"

Now, eager as was I to learn the full extent of the danger which menaced, I clutched Timothy by the throat so fiercely that he cried out, and young Chris, hearing the noise, asked stupidly:

"Who may be there? Who is raising a noise to give an alarm to those who would hang us?"

"Arouse yourself, Chris Ludwig," I cried sharply, creeping back along the plank to catch him by the arm, for I was minded he should come out of this swoon of terror as soon as might be. "Rouse yourself, for here is Timothy Bowers who has come to give us information of what has happened, even though he may not be able to aid us."

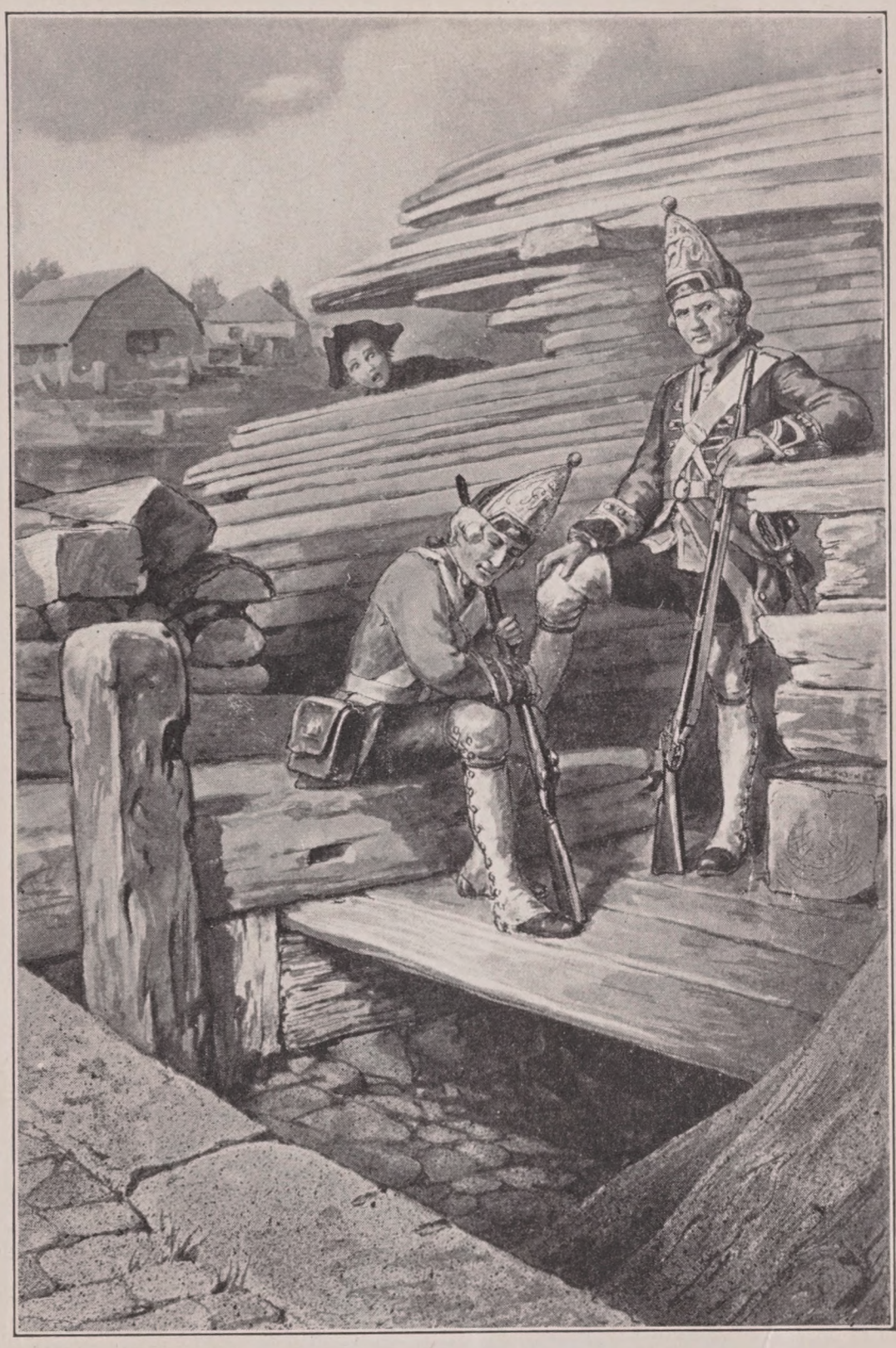
"How did he come?" Chris asked stupidly, and as I replied, the idea came into my mind like a flash of light.

"He came as we shall go, lad, by swimming! If he could find his way here, verily we can follow him out, and we are the same as free this moment!"

Such words as these could not fail of arousing the lad from his apathy of terror, and now he was as keenly on the alert as I would have him, pressing forward in the darkness that he might put his hand upon Timothy while the lad told his story, which we were burning to hear.

It was little, however, that Timothy Bowers could tell us when we had recovered sufficiently from our excitement to listen.

He knew naught, save that suddenly he saw Skinny Baker free on the street, and, coming down to the lumber pile as swiftly as might be, found two lobster-backs guarding the entrance where we



HE FOUND TWO LOBSTERBACKS GUARDING THE ENTRANCE.

were in the custom of creeping through into the vacant space beyond.

Tim had sufficient sense to understand that if Skinny Baker was walking the streets free, Jeremy and Sam must be in the clutches of the lobster-backs, and straightway he took every precaution for his own safety, going to the house of a cousin who lived on Third street beyond Chestnut, rather than returning home.

While he lay there in hiding during the day, his cousin, who was a girl of mayhap fourteen or fifteen years, went out on the street, where, after some time had been spent, she gathered that two rebel lads had been arrested. No sooner was this information come to her than she ran plumply against Master Baker, who, pluming himself over the fact that the British officers were taking some notice of him now that his son had been able to give what seemed to be valuable information, was strutting along the street like any turkey cock.

She, dear girl, had wit enough to ask him if he had any news from his son, for Master Baker had made public the fact that Skinny was missing.

Then it was the Tory told her that Skinny had been held prisoner by a party of wicked rebel lads; but now was escaped, and those who held him captive were themselves in jail, where, so he said, he hoped they would stay until they went to their death.

It was poor information enough to us who thirsted for all the details, and I was mystified as to why Skinny, who was not a quick-witted lad, nor one who had courage enough to fight his way through, had succeeded in shaking off Sam and Jeremy.

However, that was but of little moment so far as our situation was concerned.

Our company of Minute Boys had hardly more than been formed when two of them were prisoners, with the chance of being hardly dealt with, and here under the timbers were three more who must bring all their wits to bear if they would preserve their freedom.

When Timothy had come to an end of his story, I asked him whether he had seen any lobster-backs on the shore near by the lumber pile when he swam down the stream, and he replied grimly, while I could almost fancy even in the darkness that there was a smile of content on his face:

"I had no spare time to watch out for lobster-backs, knowing if they caught a glimpse of my head on the stream they would soon let me understand I had been discovered, therefore I swam on, giving little heed to anything save my own progress."

"But why did you come here, Timothy, when you knew that the lobster-backs must be waiting for young Chris and me?" I asked.

"That was exactly why I did come," the lad replied promptly. "There was in my mind a fancy that you might possibly have done exactly as you did, and were waiting here in the belief that some of our Minute Boys would come to your aid. Therefore it was I cast about as to how I could best make my way to this place."

"You are a true comrade, Timothy Bowers!" I cried, seizing both his hands with a grip that caused him to wince with pain. "In all my reaching out for some means of escape, it never came into my thick head that one of our lads who called

himself a Minute Boy, could or would come to our aid."

"I have come," Timothy said in a laughing tone; "but whether it is to your aid or no remains to be seen. In fact I misdoubt my being able to help, and have an idea that I shall rather be a burden upon you, for where two might swim up the river unseen, three are like to show themselves, either by noise, or because of so many black objects upon the surface of the water."

"You have brought aid, Timothy, even though we are taken next minute, for it has heartened Chris and me, who were well-nigh dead with despair, to such courage as I doubt not will bring us through in safety, for a certain time at least. We are boldened to do great things now, knowing that at the end of them is, perhaps, our safety, therefore let us get about the work rather than remain here thinking of what may happen."

"In that you are pleasing me exactly," Timothy replied. "I have no desire to linger here, and if you are minded to follow me, I am ready to take to the water; but once there I know not what we shall do, or which way we are to turn. If I might take you to the house of my cousin, it would be well; but my aunt has said that if peradventure I found any of my comrades wandering around the city, I must escort them to some other place, for she fears that too many boys gathering at her home would attract the attention of the lobster-backs, thereby bringing her in danger of arrest."

"I have thought that mayhap we might find our way back to Valley Forge," I suggested, and Timothy cried on the instant:

"No, no, do not venture that way! Simcoe's rangers went up the road to Germantown this afternoon, so I heard at the house where I have been hiding, and who shall say that they are not out in search of you? You must find some hiding place in the city, and mark you, Richard Salter, I am of the belief that it is our business to teach Skinny Baker a lesson which as yet he has not received."

"What?" young Chris cried in a tone of mingled surprise and fear, "Would you now, when the hue and cry is out against us, think of paying Skinny Baker back in the coin which he deserves?"

"Ay, that I would," Timothy replied stoutly. "The lobster-backs haven't got us yet, and it strikes me that we are timorous lads if we give up at this moment simply because the Britishers are burning to take us prisoners. It is our business to do whatsoever we may to aid Jeremy and Sam, for verily they are in sore distress, and you would not forsake a comrade at such a time?"

The lad caused me to feel shame for myself. He stood in quite as great danger as did Chris and I, and yet instead of mourning over his fate as I had done during all that long day, he was reaching out in the hope to help others — had already taken desperate chances on the chance that we might have come back, and seemed to have cast aside all thoughts of self.

Again I clutched him by the hand, and said in a tone which he must have known was sincerely from the bottom of my heart:

"Timothy Bowers, you are a comrade among a thousand! I have never known but one who

would do as much for a friend, and that one Jeremy Hapgood, who you say is now in prison."

"Ay, that's where he is, Richard Salter; but if you and I are half as keen-witted as we claim to be, it seems to me we should be able to work him some good, for the lobster-backs feel so secure of holding this city that they are grown careless, as you know full well. Once you and Chris are out of this place, which is much like a rat-trap, I dare venture to say we can find a chance to hide without bringing danger upon those who care for us, and what matters though we go hungry for a day or two, if so be we do all that which we should?"

You can well fancy how I was heartened; how my courage was strengthened by such words as these from a lad whom I had never believed had it in him to do brave deeds, and if there was a hero in the city of Philadelphia that night, I claim it was Timothy Bowers.

He had brought me out from the slough of despond, and I fancied now it was possible for me to see my way clear, despite the fact that all those servants of General Howe who wore red coats were on the lookout to make me prisoner.

"It shall be you who leads the way, Timothy, and we are ready at the word, unless, peradventure, you think better for us to linger here awhile longer."

"This is no place in which to stand idle. The first move is to get away, for the thick-headed lobster-backs believe there is no question but that on your return from Valley Forge — and of course Skinny told them where you had gone — this will be the first place you aim at. Therefore if so be they fail to see you by to-morrow, I'll go bail

they'll search inside here. We have considerable of work before us, for it is no child's play to swim against the current."

"Go you on and we will follow," I cried, throwing off my shoes that they might not encumber me while in the water, and young Chris followed my example. Timothy himself, I learned by sense of touch, was already barefoot.

Then the brave lad led the way down on the plank where we moored the *Jolly Rover,* and allowed himself to sink gently into the water in such manner as not to raise the slightest ripple, we following his every movement.

I must confess, however, brave though I felt myself to be while he was talking, there was more than a certain fear in my heart when we came out from under the timbers, swimming close within the shadow of the bank, for I feared, and with good reason, that some of the lobster-backs might be near at hand watching for just such a manœuvre as we were executing.

Even while we struck out, striving to avoid making any commotion in the water and at the same time keeping so near Timothy that I could see his head even in the darkness, I reproached myself for the cowardly fear and despair which had come upon me during the day.

Now, after all my forebodings, we were going peacefully away from the hiding place without being molested by the enemy, and all because one certain lad had come to hearten us, showing that we were selfish indeed to think only of ourselves when there were comrades in sore distress needing aid.

I believe that the sense of shame caused by my

having shown the white feather at a time when I needed all my courage, became so great as to quicken my wits, for even while we swam I bethought me of a safe place of refuge if so be we might gain it, and, hastening my stroke, I pulled alongside Timothy as I said to him:

"There is at the Jolly Tar inn the Weaver of Germantown, who is, as we know, a friend to the Cause, and it must be that Master Targe, the innkeeper, is also what the lobster-backs call a rebel. If one can remain hidden in his tavern, why not all of us, and there we shall find not only shelter, but food."

"It is the place for us," Timothy replied quickly, and with a note of relief in his voice. "Surely there is no other house in all the city we could come at so easily as the inn."

As a matter of course this conversation had been carried on in whispers, and young Chris heard nothing whatsoever concerning it; but when we turned to enter the creek his curiosity was roused, and he asked almost angrily if I knew whither we were bound.

"To the Jolly Tar inn, where is the Weaver of Germantown," I replied curtly, and then turned all my attention to swimming as swiftly as might be, for now we were come so near a place of refuge and could see no one on the bank, it surely seemed as if we should strain every nerve in order to arrive at the earliest possible moment.

I heard a smothered exclamation of satisfaction from young Chris when I had spoken, and knew that he understood what we might find if so be we arrived at our journey's end in safety.

And this we did, thanks to that same Providence

which it appeared to me had had direct ruling over us from the time we left the falls to go to the hiding place.

We came up out of the water within a few yards of the inn, taking due care to make no noise whatsoever, as you may well suppose, and then, instead of going boldly into the place, for we knew not who might be there, we circled around the building until it had been possible, through the windows, to see the interior of every room on the lower floor.

There was no one to be seen inside save the sour-visaged landlord, who no longer looked surly to me now that I had good reason for believing he was a true friend to the Cause.

It is not to be wondered at that Master Targe looked up in surprise when we three lads, dripping like water rats, and I dare say looking very much like such animals, entered the tap-room.

While one might have counted ten he stood gazing at us as if having no knowledge that he had ever met any of the party before, and I, fearing he might be pleased to forget that I had been recommended to his care, said in a low tone as I came close to him:

"We would have speech with the Weaver of Germantown, and later with you, if it be possible."

"Where have you lads come from?"

"Out of the river," Timothy replied laughingly, and Master Targe, taking no heed to what the lad counted was a joke, asked sternly:

"Where before that?"

"Young Chris and I came down from Valley Forge to our hiding place, not knowing what had

happened, and but for Timothy Bowers here, I dare say before morning we would have been in the hands of the lobster-backs."

"Why would you see the Weaver of Germantown?" the innkeeper asked, and this I thought was displaying rather too much curiosity, therefore replied, not curtly; but in such a tone as showed that I was not willing to be questioned closely:

"That remains for him to tell you, if so be it is his mind. Master Dingley sent us here, and I believe we should have speech with him before saying aught to anyone else."

To my surprise the innkeeper appeared well satisfied with the reply, and said in a tone of commendation:

"Verily you are cautious for a lad of your years, and if so be you continue in the same way, then will there be less difficulty in doing the work which may be set for you."

Having said this he came out from behind the bar, where he had been lounging, so to speak, leaning on his elbows over the wooden counter, and without bidding us follow him, went through the next room and up a flight of stairs which I knew led to the apartments in the rear.

Timothy would have hung back to wait for an invitation; but I was minded to take the innkeeper's movements as indication that he was ready to lead us to that man who was called the Weaver of Germantown, and beckoned for my comrades to follow me.

Within two or three minutes we were standing before this worker for the Cause, who was periling his life by remaining in the city, and Master Targe had left the room, closing the door carefully be-

hind him, after which the so-called Weaver of Germantown took good care to bolt it securely.

Then, looking from one to the other of us with much the same surprise as had been shown by the innkeeper, he asked of me:

"Did you fail to meet Master Dingley?"

"Indeed we did not, and came back from Valley Forge this morning, not knowing that anything in the way of trouble had occurred."

Then the man, as if simply to gratify his own curiosity, questioned us as to why we were so soaked with water, and not until I had explained how it was we succeeded in leaving the hiding place among the timbers, did he show any desire to hear what we might have brought in the way of instructions or news.

"Your Timothy Bowers seems to be a boy who can be depended on in time of trouble," he said in a tone of satisfaction. "When a lad like him will undertake to aid his comrades at such risks as he ventured, one may well put confidence in him. Now tell me what you heard from the man to whom I sent you."

In order that the Weaver of Germantown might understand fully all we had seen and heard, I made an overly long story of the matter, to which he listened patiently and with deepest interest until I was come to the end, when he said as if speaking to himself:

"Then it appears that he whom you met believed it would be possible for boys to keep an eye out over those who are to be at the carnival, with the idea that something may be learned there. At the time such a proposition was made to you, it was not known that your prisoner had escaped, and you

yourselves in gravest danger of being brought before a court martial."

"Ay, and it seems to me we are come to an end of our rope, so far as serving the colonies is concerned," young Chris replied promptly, whereupon the man looked at him sharply, and said in what I took to be a tone of irony:

"When danger threatens you are ready to give over calling yourself a Minute Boy, eh?"

"If you accuse me of showing the white feather, then are you doing a wrong," Chris replied hotly. "It is one thing to do all a lad may, taking such chances as come to those who play the spy; but when is coupled to it the fact that beyond peradventure the hue and cry has gone out against Richard Salter and myself, while every lobster-back in the city has been instructed to search for us, then does it seem as if we might question whether there was a possibility of doing anything, save allow ourselves to be taken prisoners."

"That is as may be, lad," the Weaver of Germantown replied as if he was saddened by the fact. "So that you have come to believe you may not go out of doors without being taken in custody, then indeed has your time of service come to an end, and we need make no further talk regarding what is desired by those whom you left at Valley Forge."

CHAPTER VIII

THE CARNIVAL

I HAD no idea of being thus cut off from work as a Minute Boy simply because young Chris had decided it was too dangerous for us to continue such service, and speaking perhaps more sharply than I should have done, I said to this man whom we had been instructed to look upon in the light of a superior officer:

"There is no question of our refusing duty simply because of danger. It is for you to say where we shall go, and what we must attempt to do, you knowing all the circumstances. If, peradventure, you send us where there is no chance to escape being taken prisoners, then is the matter on your head rather than ours. Do not be so quick to say that we are no longer of any use to the Cause."

"And what say you, Master Bowers?" the man asked, turning to Timothy, and the lad replied with a smile, as if he was well content with the entire situation:

"I am of much the same mind as Richard Salter. It does indeed look as though we had little or no chance of gathering information; but I am ready to make a try for it even at this moment."

"Well said, lads!" the Weaver of Germantown cried, and clapping young Chris on the shoulder in a friendly manner, he added, "I have no doubt

but that your backbone will be stiff by the time you have seen your comrades begin work."

"There is no need of stiffening my backbone," young Chris replied sulkily. "I want it to be understood that I am no nearer showing the white feather than any other lad in this city; but when it is a matter of our being hounded by all the lobster-backs General Howe has here, then does it seem to me a foolish matter to make any attempt save that of remaining in hiding."

"Then it shall be you who remains in hiding, and your comrades may go forth to ply their dangerous business. If there was naught of peril in this work of ours while we strive to teach the king a lesson, then could there be no credit attached to what we do."

"I shall go wherever Richard Salter and Timothy Bowers dare stick their noses," Chris cried angrily. "Since you are so sharp for us to show whether we are like to be timorous, what is the work you would have us do just now?"

"Remain in hiding three or four days, mayhap, and in less than that time the Britishers will tire of looking for a couple of lads who amused themselves by making the son of a Tory a prisoner."

"That is exactly the question in our minds," I interrupted. "I dare not return to my home, for there are lodging British officers who know me full well, and where else may we go?"

"I allow that Master Targe can take care of you for a few days, and here in this inn, unless something unforeseen occurs, you will be almost as safe as at Valley Forge. Content yourselves to remain indoors, and confined to one room, until I shall give the word. Then it is my belief that you

may venture out with no more danger than before the Baker lad gave his information; but feeling fairly safe from being taken into custody save you run upon someone who knows you exceeding well."

Such advice as this was much to my liking; it was exactly that for which I had come, and on the instant I felt as if the greater portion of all my troubles were swept away, save for the fact that I could not let mother know of my safety.

However, as to this last I consoled myself with the thought that she would understand we were not in custody, if she failed of hearing such news from those lobster-backs who lodged in her house. If, peradventure, I had been made prisoner, then they would surely give her information, for, saving the fact that they served the king and were ready to do whatsoever they might to harm us of the colonies, they were fairly decent men so far as ordinary acquaintances go.

Then it was that the Weaver of Germantown made a signal, by knocking upon the wainscoting of the door in a peculiar manner, and straightway, within thirty seconds perhaps, the innkeeper appeared, whereupon the two men held a reasonably long conversation in the passageway, speaking in guarded tones as if it was not their desire we should overhear the words.

When it had come to an end, he whom we had been told to consider our commander, said in a matter-of-fact tone:

"You will remain in this house, and the room next this shall be put in order for you. The three must sleep in one bed, for Master Targe is

not troubled with overly much furniture in this inn of his, and it is not well the rooms that are ordinarily occupied by lodgers should be dismantled, lest it appear suspicious to whomsoever might be inclined to play the spy for the benefit of the Britishers."

That we were to be taken care of in fairly good fashion all of us understood half an hour later, when Master Targe himself came into the room, bringing so much in the way of provisions that the four of us ate a very hearty supper, and I am willing to swear that young Chris and I stood sadly in need of the food.

While we ate the Weaver of Germantown discussed the escape of Skinny Baker, and asked Timothy Bowers many questions concerning it; but, as I have already set down, the lad knew very little beyond the fact that the Tory cur was at liberty, and Jeremy and Sam had disappeared.

As a matter of course, we understood that the Britishers were holding them in one place or another as prisoners, and instead of speaking regarding what we were to do to aid him in spying, the man, when he was come to an end of questioning, immediately set about speculating as to how it would be possible for us to lend a hand to our comrades.

Until he had spoken as if it was no more than a matter of business, this rescuing two prisoners from the Britishers, I had not so much as dreamed we might be the means of setting them free; but now, although no plan had been proposed, a great hope sprang up in my heart that before we ourselves had fallen into serious trouble, there was a possi-

bility of showing Jeremy and Sam that the tie which bound us lads together as Minute Boys was a strong one.

"The first task is to find out where the lads are held," the Weaver of Germantown said as if speaking to himself, "and that much I fancy we can rely upon Master Targe to learn. He has the reputation of being one who would stand neutral in this trouble 'twixt the colonies and the king, and the Tories are of the belief they may soon bring him around to their way of thinking. Surely, they say to themselves, he can be no rebel, otherwise he would not hold himself aloof from them. Therefore it is that within the past two months Master Dingley and I have learned very much from him, he having picked it up here and there when he had as patrons some of the Tory brood."

It is not possible for me to set down all we said that night, for not until a late hour were we three lads willing to go into the next chamber in order to sleep, so eager had we become over this unformed plan of liberating Jeremy and Sam.

If, however, we thought it was a task which would be set about immediately, then was the mistake a grave one, for on the following morning the Weaver of Germantown flatly refused to discuss the matter with us when we were come into his room for breakfast, saying, as if the matter no longer was of great importance to him:

"We will wait until finding out where the lads are confined, before making overly much talk."

As a matter of course this did not prevent us lads from talking among ourselves, and we foolishly laid plans one after another, each of which

I dare say would have been impossible of execution, while our companion, who it appeared to me, now that daylight had come, was holding himself aloof from us, refused to take any part.

When another night shrouded the city in darkness, however, we had good proof that the Weaver of Germantown had not given over doing whatsoever he might toward aiding our comrades, for then it was, after the innkeeper had called him out into the passage for a private interview, that he came back and said to us, as if the information was something which gave him greatest satisfaction:

"Your lads whom you would aid are confined in the Stone Prison, or, at least, in the work-house portion of the building, and it would seem as if the Britishers were eager to give us an opportunity of freeing them, for there is no place in all the city, so far as I know, that would be so favorable for our plans."

Now you must know that this Stone Prison was at the corner of High and Third streets. The jail itself fronted on High street, and I have heard it spoken of as the debtors' prison, while on Third street was another building joined to the first by a high wall, which formed part of the yard enclosure, and this was the work-house. There were, in the garret of this last building, certain rooms set apart for prisoners, in case the High-street jail proved too small to accommodate all who were under arrest.

When General Howe took possession of our city and began clapping into jail all the so-called rebels he came across, he found himself cramped for places in which to confine his captives, therefore even the State House was used for confining pris-

oners of war. This work-house of the Stone Prison had ordinarily been used by the Britishers as a guard-house; that is to say, a place where they confined their own soldiers who were guilty of some slight misdemeanor.

Now, as a matter of course, all us lads knew the Stone Prison almost as well as we did our own homes, and I could say to within the length of an inch where some of the wall had crumbled away sufficiently to give a fellow a foothold, if he dug his toes in deeply, because more than once had Jeremy Hapgood and I clambered up to the top in order to look over into the work-house, where the lobster-backs were undergoing punishment for having been drunken, or disrespectful to some popinjay of a superior officer.

"If we only knew in what part of the building the lads were held," Timothy Bowers said reflectively, and the Weaver of Germantown replied promptly:

"They are in the attic of the building, of course, where are the cells, for it does not stand to reason the Britishers would house them with the red-coats who are undergoing punishment."

"I will undertake to get inside the yard, on any dark night, within half an hour, if so be the sentries have not been doubled since I last saw the place," I said, and young Chris cried in a tone of derision:

"Much good it would do you to get inside the walls, save you counted on joining Jeremy and Sam."

"Nay, nay, lad," the Weaver of Germantown added quickly. "If so be you know a way to get to the top of the wall, it may chance we shall hit

upon a plan of going yet further. It should not be a difficult matter on a dark night, unless peradventure unusually strict guard be kept, to gain the roof of the work-house from the wall at the corner of the streets. If I mistake not, it comes well in height to the eaves of the building."

"And what then?" Chris asked with a sneer.

"We should at least be nearer the lads then than we are now, and the remainder is something to be figured out at a later day."

Then it was that the man refused to hold further conversation with us, insisting that we go to bed immediately, and, as a matter of fact, we could do no less than obey.

But it was not possible for him to force us to sleep, and we lay there on the bags of straw many hours, speculating as to what might be done if we could gain the roof of the building, or as to how we could come at those cell-like rooms under the eaves where it stood to reason our comrades were held.

I fancied I had a scheme which could be worked, if so be the night was stormy; but I refrained from giving words to it at the time because Chris was ever ready to make sport of plans formed by another, therefore held my peace, letting him throw cold water as he would upon the proposition that we could do anything toward releasing Jeremy and Sam.

On the following day our Weaver of Germantown had again seemingly become indifferent to that which we would do, and held frequent interviews with Master Targe in the passage-way, until we were becoming wearied of inaction.

It may seem strange that after we had escaped

such grave peril, there was even the lightest whisper of grumbling from us because we were forced to remain hived up in one room where we were seemingly in safety. Yet did this inaction so weigh upon me, that before eight and forty hours had passed I came almost to believe it would be better we went boldly out on the street, taking the chances of arrest, rather than stay there cooped up like chickens who were being fattened for the killing. So I said petulantly to this man who could be so friendly at times, and again appear so distant that one hesitated to speak to him, whereupon he replied gravely:

"If you are to accomplish anything in this world, lad, whether it be playing the part of a spy, or engaging in what some might call a more honest pursuit, the first thing which you must learn is patience. He who tires quickly because of the sameness of his surroundings, or because of a treadmill-like existence, is not the one to climb high in whatsoever pursuit he follows. To steal from the Britishers their secrets, or to release two lads who are held under heavy guard as prisoners, are not simple matters, and he who expects that either one or the other can be done off-hand without expenditure of time, sets himself down as a simple."

As a matter of course that silenced me, and during the remainder of the day I strove earnestly to appear patient, as if it mattered little whether I remained there, or went abroad.

One day passed after another, each a weary time of waiting for we knew not what. Again and again would young Chris insist that it was needless for us to be wasting the hours if we counted on making any attempt to aid our comrades, and to all

of his complaint and reproaches, for he was not choice of words, this odd man gave no heed.

There were, in fact, moments when you might have said he failed to hear the lad, even when young Chris was complaining the most loudly.

Then on a certain day, however, after we had been cooped up in that small room so long that it seemed to me almost as if I had spent half my life there, the Weaver of Germantown said suddenly, as if the fact had but just been borne in upon him:

"Now, lads, I believe the hour has come when you may make the venture."

"What venture?" young Chris asked sharply.

"That of striving to be of assistance to our people who are fighting against the king."

"Do you mean that we may go out from here?" Timothy Bowers asked, and there was a joyous ring in his voice which told how great the relief, and how little he regarded the possible danger.

"Since you have been cooped up here General Clinton has arrived to take command of the troops, and it is to-morrow that this carnival, which they call the Mischianza, is to be given. Now I propose that if you lads are willing to make the venture, you shall set off at near about midnight for Southwark, and there loiter around, each taking a different station, to learn what you may from the guests themselves."

"What?" young Chris cried in amazement. "Are we going to the carnival? We whom the lobster-backs will arrest on sight?"

"Ay, that is my plan; but I am of the mind that you will not be arrested. As a matter of course there will be many servants around the grounds, and Master Targe has secured for you costumes

which will prove an effective disguise. If you are sufficiently quick-witted, it should be a simple matter to mingle with the other attendants, waiting upon the guests whenever you are called. It is by no means certain you will gain valuable information, and yet I believe there is so great a possibility that we should take advantage of it. Are you willing to make the trial?"

"Of course we are, sir," Timothy Bowers replied gleefully. "To say nothing of having a chance to take part in the lobster-backs' carnival, it will do me solid good to breathe the fresh air once more. There have been times since I came to this inn when it seemed that I would stifle, although there is no reason why I make complaint concerning the accommodations at the Jolly Tar, for he who is in danger of the gallows, as I count that we three are, should be easily satisfied while he is allowed to remain at liberty."

"But what about our comrades who are held prisoners in the work-house?" I asked sharply, thinking that the Weaver of Germantown had forgotten them entirely, whereupon he said severely, and in a tone which was much like that of reproof:

"The imprisonment of two lads is but a trifling matter as compared with the needs of the Cause. Many a one must undergo imprisonment, or even give up his life, and thousands upon thousands suffer bitterly in order that we may accomplish that on which we have set our minds. I know to a certainty that up to the time of General Clinton's arrival nothing had been done in the way of punishing your comrades. I suspect that the Britishers are waiting until you also can be captured. It is

equally positive no move will be made immediately; surely not to-morrow during the carnival, and it may be that when the festival has come to an end we shall find time to look after those whom you would free."

And now it is, in order that you may the better understand what we lads did when we literally thrust our heads into the lion's mouth, or to what purpose we went this way and that, I must go forward somewhat in my story, telling of what took place on the following day, even before I finish speaking of that which we did at the moment when the Weaver of Germantown set out plainly before us that we were in fact to act the part of spies, and, if taken while thus at work, there would be no question but that the gallows would be our final halting place in this world.

Therefore I propose to set down what was done at this carnival, after which I will come back and explain how we went about our duties. In telling of the gaieties which the lobster-backs indulged in, I count to read from a letter Major Andre himself wrote to his friends in England, and which now lies plainly before me, it having been captured at Monmouth among some of the British camp equipment, though why it was he failed to send the missive I do not understand.

This is what he wrote:

"A grand regatta began the entertainment. It consisted of three divisions. In the first was the Ferret galley, having on board several general officers and a number of ladies. In the centre was the Hussar galley, with Sir William and Lord Howe, Sir Henry Clinton, the officers of their suite, and some ladies. The Cornwallis galley brought up the

rear, having on board General Knyphausen and his suite, three British generals and a party of ladies. On each quarter of these galleys, and forming their division, were five flatboats, lined with green cloth and filled with ladies and gentlemen. In front of the whole were three flatboats with a band of music in each. Six barges rowed about each flank to keep off the swarm of boats that covered the river from side to side. The galleys were decked out with a variety of colors and streamers, and in each flatboat was displayed the flag of its own division.

"In the stream opposite the centre of the city the *Fanny,* armed ship, magnificently decorated, was placed at anchor, and at some distance ahead lay his Majesty's ship *Roebuck,* with the admiral's flag hoisted at the foretop masthead. The transport ships, extending in line the whole length of the town, appeared with colors flying and crowded with spectators, as were also the openings of several wharves on shore, exhibiting the most picturesque and enlivening scene the eye could desire. The rendezvous was at Knight's wharf at the northern extremity of the city. By half-past four the whole Company were embarked, and the signal being made by the *Vigilant's* manning ship, the three divisions rowed slowly down, preserving their proper intervals, and keeping time to the music that led the fleet.

"Arrived between the *Fanny* and the Market wharf, a signal was made from one of the boats ahead, and the whole lay upon their oars, while the music played 'God save the King,' and three cheers given for the vessels were returned from the multitude on shore. By this time the flood tide became too rapid for the galleys to advance; they were

therefore quitted, and the party disposed of in different barges. This alteration broke in upon the order of procession; but was necessary to give sufficient time for displaying the entertainments that were prepared on shore.

"The landing place was at the Old Fort, a little to the southward of the town, fronting the building prepared for the reception of the company, about four hundred yards from the water by a gentle ascent. As soon as the general's barge was seen to push from the shore, a salute of seventeen guns was fired from the *Roebuck,* and, after some interval, by the same number from the *Vigilant.* The company, as they disembarked, arranged themselves into a line of procession, and advanced through an avenue formed by two files of grenadiers, and a line of light horse supporting each file. This avenue led to a square lawn of two hundred and fifty yards on each side, lined with troops, and properly prepared for the exhibition of a tilt and tournament, according to the customs and ordinances of ancient chivalry. We proceeded through the centre of the square.

"The music, consisting of all the bands of the army, moved in front. The managers, with favors of white and blue ribbons in their breasts, followed next in order. The general, admiral, and the rest of the company proceeded promiscuously.

"In front appeared the building, bounding the view through a vista formed by two triumphal arches erected at proper intervals in a line with the landing-place. Two pavilions with rows of benches rising one above the other, and serving as the wings of the first triumphal arch, received the ladies, while the gentlemen arranged themselves in convenient

order on each side. On the front seat of each pavilion were placed seven of the principal young ladies of the country, dressed in Turkish habits and wearing in their turbans the favors with which they meant to reward the several knights who were to contend in their honor. These arrangements were scarce made, when the sound of trumpets was heard in the distance, and a band of knights, dressed in ancient habits of white and red silk, and mounted on gray horses richly caparisoned in trappings of the same colors, entered the lists, attended by their esquires on foot, in suitable apparel."

Now then, in this letter of Major Andre's, he writes many pages concerning what they did when the knights rode into the field and fought with lances, and blunt swords, and all that sort of thing, which it is not necessary I set down. It is this last which is most important, for in it did young Chris, Timothy and I figure in great shape, according to our own belief:

Here is the remainder of General Andre's letter:

"The company were regaled with tea, lemonade, and other cooling liquors when they entered the house. On the same floor with the ball-room were four drawing-rooms, with sideboards of refreshments. Dancing continued until ten o'clock, when the windows were thrown open and the display of fireworks began. At twelve o'clock supper was announced, and large folding doors, hitherto artfully concealed, being suddenly thrown open, discovered a magnificent saloon with three alcoves on each side which served as sideboards. Fifty-six large pier glasses, ornamented with green silk artificial flowers and ribbons; one hundred branches with three lights in each, trimmed in the same manner as the mirrors;

eighteen lustres, each with twenty-four lights, suspended from the ceiling, and ornamented as the branches; three hundred wax tapers disposed along the supper table; four hundred and thirty covers, twelve hundred dishes, twenty-four black slaves in Oriental dresses, with silver collars and bracelets, ranged in two lines, and bending to the ground as the general and admiral approached the saloon. Then came the drinking of healths, and the toasts, and after supper the dancing was continued until four o'clock."

That letter gives a pretty good account of the entertainment, so I have been told. But we three lads who were at the risk of our lives, saw very little of what was going on, because we were chiefly among the servants, save when called upon by the gentlemen or ladies to bring them this or that in the way of refreshments.

You must not suppose that we were among the "twenty-four black slaves in Oriental dresses," for our station was not so high. However it had been brought about, I know not; but certain it is that the innkeeper of the Jolly Tar had provided us with costumes such as the ordinary servant wore, and we were told how we should present ourselves at Master Wharton's mansion in order to be admitted.

You may say that a person who is telling a story has no right to go ahead in the narrative in order to describe something which happened in the future; but I have striven several times to relate it in a different fashion, failing utterly, therefore must I do as I have and let you put it down to the truth, which is, that I am but a poor apology for a story-teller.

Now let me hark back to that room in the Jolly

Tar inn where we three lads were gathered with the Weaver of Germantown, when he astounded us by announcing that if we were willing to take the chances, then might we go to this carnival of the lobster-backs.

We all knew full well where was Master Wharton's country house at Southwark, and were told that when midnight was come, we must, having made up in parcels the dresses which we were to wear for the occasion, set off, and, if possible, conceal ourselves near about the mansion.

Then at daylight we were to put on our disguises, which I may say here consisted simply of what I fancied was a Turkish style of dress, made of some green and black stuff that completely enveloped the body, being brought up tightly around each ankle, forming thereby a most comical kind of trousers and tunic all in one piece.

As a matter of course, the clothing would not serve to hide our faces, and therein the danger lay.

If so be we did not come upon any who were acquainted with us, and there was little chance of such an unfortunate happening save in the case of those officers who lodged with my mother, then were we safe in embarking upon the venture.

We were to present ourselves boldly at the rear of the house, after having put on our odd clothing, and from that on it would be the duty of Master Wharton's upper servants, or the master of ceremonies, to direct us to what we should do.

The only matter of which we were absolutely positive was, that in event of our being discovered, then was death almost certain, for there could be no question but that we had gone there as spies, and would be dealt with accordingly.

CHAPTER IX

ON DUTY

It is not needed that I should set down all we said during this night before the carnival, when we were listening intently, as you may well suppose, to the advice which the Weaver of Germantown gave us concerning our behavior.

I dare venture to say there was no desire for slumber on the part of any of our company. I know for fact that I could not have closed my eyes in sleep even though life had depended upon it, for every now and then a cold chill of fear would run down my spine as I realized what would be the result if I came full upon some one of those officers who lodged with my mother.

I do not hesitate to say I was given sadly to timorousness during that time, and if I ever come across a lad who claims to me that he can venture upon a task which may result in his death, without feeling certain fear and having many forebodings, then I shall say that he is either devoid of all feeling, or telling that which is absolutely a lie.

When midnight had come we were made aware of the fact by Master Targe entering the room without the ceremony of knocking, and having with him three small parcels, one of which he handed to each of us lads.

Then without a word, and in a grave and solemn manner which called up all my fears once more, the

Weaver of Germantown clasped each of us by the hand, and Master Targe beckoned for us to follow him.

This we did, leaving the building by a rear door, and when we were come to the gate-way the inn-keeper said, speaking curtly as if we had given him some cause for offence:

"You know as well as I how to find the place where your work is to be done. Remember that if things go wrong, and you should be persuaded to confess how you gained admission to the grounds, or how you came in possession of the clothes which you carry, great trouble would not only come upon me; but you might involve in disaster those who are working hardest in favor of the Cause — those who are able to do our people the greatest amount of good. Now get on, lads; bear in mind that you must be cautious; that you are holding your lives in your hands; but strive not to let such fact appear on your faces."

It seemed to me like a sorry send-off, much as if Master Targe had little hope we would return, and I have no doubt that both Chris and Timothy were affected by his words, as was I.

Instead of speaking when we started down the street, both the lads remained silent, whereupon I fancied they were doing much the same as I, that is to say, turning over the many, many chances against us in the hope of finding therein some little ray of hope.

To tell the truth, I had not the slightest idea that we could present ourselves as servants and carry off the part without coming to grief. In the first place we knew nothing whatsoever concerning such duties as would be demanded of us, and I said to

myself that if I was required to serve one of the guests with the least article of refreshment, I would have no idea as to how it should be done in the manner which the lobster-backs were accustomed to from those who served them.

There was little or no danger that we would be overhauled on the street while making our way to Southwark. It seemed as if the lobster-backs, from general to private, were devoting all their time and energies to making ready for this foolish exhibition of themselves, for I could look upon the carnival affair as little better than folly.

The streets were seemingly deserted. We traversed square after square without meeting a single person. Never before since General Howe came into our city of Philadelphia had I ventured out near about nine o'clock or after, without coming upon one or more squads of red-coats who were patrolling the streets to see that we rebels kept under cover.

As the moments passed and we met with no one to oppose our progress, I grew bolder, and for the first time since leaving the Jolly Tar inn, ventured to speak.

"We might have waited until morning, and taken matters more leisurely," I said with a laugh which had in it little or no mirth. "As matters stand, we must hide ourselves somewhere in the shrubbery, according to directions given by the Weaver of Germantown, and I am thinking the minutes will pass slowly, for it can be no less than six or seven hours we must remain there under cover."

"It's all of the same piece of cloth," Timothy added cheerily, and verily that lad was a comrade after my own heart. "It is better we remain hid-

den six or seven hours, than that we take what you might be pleased to call our ease at the Jolly Tar, and then set off to find ourselves overhauled by the watch, who, seeing these clothes of green and black, which most like are after the same fashion as those worn by Master Wharton's servants, would soon come to understand that a plot of some kind was on foot."

There is no good reason why I should use overly many words in telling what we did on this night, for after we were come on duty, seemingly being the most attentive of Master Wharton's servants, happenings came so thick and fast, and withal so exciting, that to set down our words while we were walking leisurely toward Southwark, or while we were in hiding, would be much like a waste of time.

Had we been so disposed, it would have been a simple matter for us to have gained Master Wharton's house in considerably less than half an hour. As it was we took our time, seeing no lobster-backs to interfere with us, and mayhap spent a full hour, when we were come where it was necessary to search for a hiding place.

This we had little difficulty in finding close by the rear of the yard, where grew a lot of bushes so thickly that an hundred or more lads might have found among them safe cover.

We three lost no time selecting a spot in which to keep our long vigil, and then settled down with whatsoever of patience we could assume.

I had declared that we must not indulge in conversation while near Master Wharton's house, and in this matter Timothy fully agreed with me.

It would have pleased young Chris better if he could have spent the time talking on this subject or

on that, for the lad loved dearly to wag his tongue; but with Tim and me both setting our faces against anything of the kind, he could not well do other than follow our example.

Surely the remainder of that night passed slowly and was wearisome. Mayhap if there had been something to fear the minutes would have sped more swiftly; but we felt perfectly secure while remaining among the bushes, and when the day finally broke it seemed to me as if we had been crouching there a full week.

After the sun rose we put on our odd garments, not without considerable difficulty, because it was a puzzle indeed to know how they should be worn; but we finally succeeded in arraying ourselves in fairly good fashion, and then came the question of when we should begin our duties.

Young Chris would have gone directly to the house as soon as any of the inmates were astir; but I insisted that we wait until a throng had gathered, otherwise were we in more danger of detection. Therefore it was we stayed in hiding until nearabout eleven o'clock of the forenoon.

From daybreak until that hour, tradespeople, servants, soldiers with missives from their superior officers to whoever was acting as master of ceremonies, and, in fact, a host of visitors, came and went until, as I have said, within an hour of noon I proposed that we make the venture.

"You shall lead the way," Timothy whispered, pushing me on in advance, "and neither young Chris nor I will open our mouths save to echo whatever you may say if we are questioned."

Now when we came through a light gateway which marked the rearmost limit of the servants'

quarters, I fully expected that we would be brought up with a round turn and asked what was our purpose in being there. But, much to my surprise, and greatly to my relief of mind, no one seemingly gave any heed whatsoever to us.

We went on through what might be called the rear yard, until we were come to the outbuildings where were an hundred or more cooks all busily engaged preparing for the evening's festivities, and had hardly more than made our appearance before some one of the workers called us lazy fellows, chiding us because we were loitering when there was so much to be done.

Straightway one who appeared to be in authority set us about this thing or that, until we three were working as earnestly as if our whole hearts were set upon making of the carnival a success.

I hardly know what Timothy and young Chris did during the remainder of this day. As for myself, I was not allowed to spend an idle moment. Never one there cast a look of suspicion toward me, and it seemed as if all hands were doing their best to keep me busily employed.

I ran here with one thing, and there with another; was ordered into the house to carry chairs to the lawn, was sent on to the lawn to stretch this bit of canvas or arrange that group of flags, until before the afternoon was half spent I was so weary with work that I could hardly walk.

What I did or did not do matters little to you, for, since I have already set down what was done at this carnival, it is as well if I come at once into the more adventurous part of the tale; first making it plain, however, that when the people were gath-

ered for the eating, I had nothing to do save bring from the out-buildings food which I passed to those gaily-dressed servants who waited upon the guests.

The greater portion of my labors, when the feast was at an end, consisted in carrying refreshments here and there about the grounds as I was ordered by this lobster-back or that.

I even served Major Simcoe himself, who had often visited my mother's house when he came to see his friends who were lodging there, without his giving any evidence that he suspected I was other than one of Master Wharton's servants.

I could see that young Chris and Timothy were doing much as was I, for I met them now and then as they scurried to and fro between the shrubbery and the sideboards, for those officers of the king's were not long content if they could not have something with which to wet their throats, and before the evening was well begun there were no less than twenty who had best have been taken away where the ladies could not see their foolish movements.

It was after all that folly of fighting on horseback with lances and swords had come to an end, and the feast was well nigh over, that I waited upon Major Simcoe.

He had with him three other officers of high rank, as I fancied from their uniforms, who were discussing earnestly, while they walked from the house to where seats had been placed among the shrubbery, something which was seemingly of importance to themselves.

I put myself in their way, hoping to be called upon for service. Up to this time I had heard nothing save idle chatter, and it would have disap-

pointed me woefully had I gone away from that carnival without having anything of great weight to impart to the Weaver of Germantown.

If Major Simcoe had been eager to do me a great favor, he could not have gone about it in a manner that would have pleased me better.

As I came up, seemingly loitering rather than waiting to be bidden for service, he called out in a tone much as he might have used in speaking to his dog, that I was to bring wine for himself and the other gentlemen to such and such a place which he pointed out.

Never was a command obeyed more quickly that day I dare venture to say, than this one of Major Simcoe's. I felt positive the men were talking of such affairs as it would please the Weaver of Germantown to hear, therefore ran at full speed both going and coming, that I might hear all which was said, and, as the matter turned, I was not disappointed.

Fortunately for me was it that I chanced to be the one who overheard that most important of information, for in later days it brought me recognition from those in the American army whom I most revered.

When I served the gentlemen they seemingly gave no heed to me; it was as if I had been no more than a stick or a stone.

They began drinking their wine, and it was my duty as a servant that I stand near by as if awaiting further orders, or to take away the glasses, which of course I did, when came certain words which caused me to prick up my ears to such an extent that if the lobster-backs had not been so intent upon their conversation, they must have suspected from

the expression on my face that I was something more than an ordinary attendant.

Major Simcoe began the conversation, or, rather, continued it by saying:

"This Lafayette most like believes he can effect something by taking post at Barren Hill. Why he should have left Valley Forge I fail to understand, save it may be that the rag-tag and bobtail are about to come out from their dens."

"It is well the ragamuffin crowd start soon," one of the officers said with a coarse laugh, "else are they like to be disagreeably surprised. I have no real complaint to make against our commanding officers, save that they have set the morrow after an entertainment of this kind for an important move."

The third officer added with a laugh:

"Fancy turning out when one has hardly turned in, to march from here to Germantown, if not further."

"It will be further than Germantown according to my orders," Major Simcoe added quickly. "My force has been drafted to General Gray's division, and we are to make no halt nearer than three miles from Barren Hill. I fancy we are like to start immediately the festivities have been brought to an end here, if not before."

I cannot well set down the conversation from that point exactly as it took place; but this was what I learned from the discussion which became heated after the gentlemen had partaken generously of wine.

That General Lafayette had left Valley Forge was news to me, and I felt quite positive the Weaver of Germantown was also ignorant regarding it. I knew, however, from what these lobster-backs said,

that he had halted at Barren Hill, and I made no question but that this intended movement of the Britishers was meant as an attack upon the gallant young Frenchman who had come overseas to lend his aid to us of the colonies.

It appeared from the conversation, as I have already said, that on the following morning General Grant of the Britishers, assisted by Sir William Erskine, would set out from Philadelphia, marching up the Schuylkill; but how far none of the gentlemen who were talking appeared to know.

A second force under General Gray, of which Major Simcoe had spoken, was to advance until arriving within three miles of General Lafayette's position.

Then was to come a third detachment under Sir Henry Clinton himself, which would pass through Germantown up to Chestnut Hill, and from there on as might be determined.

Now all this was to be done on the following morning, and it seemed to me of the greatest importance that I should get word to the Weaver of Germantown without delay, for it was then late in the evening, and he who could gain Valley Forge before the morrow's dawning must needs be well mounted.

Unless Master Targe could provide horses, we had no means of making our way up the Schuylkill save by boat as far as the falls, and thence on foot, which would give the Britishers ample time to carry out their plans for surprising General Lafayette, before we could get word to his ears.

It seemed to me necessary I should leave the place at once, and make all speed toward the Jolly Tar inn. In fact, I was burning to get away from

those three officers who were taking more of wine than was good for them, and who demanded that I bring this or bring that until I was well-nigh distracted.

Having gone to the house at least the fourth time for more in the way of refreshment, and chancing to come upon another fellow who was dressed in similar fashion to me, I gave him the bottle which I had just gotten from the kitchen, ordering him, as if I had the right, to carry it out to Major Simcoe and attend him and his companions until they should no longer require any service.

Fortunate indeed was it for me that this fellow whom I had lighted upon by chance was no regular servant of the house, otherwise would he have questioned my authority.

As it was, however, being most like someone who lived near by and had been hired for that occasion only, he meekly did my bidding, and then was I again fortunate in coming full upon Timothy Bowers, who at the moment appeared to have no particular service to perform.

Leading him out of doors where I could make certain no one might overhear me, I told the lad that I had heard such information as seemingly made it necessary for us to seek out the Weaver of Germantown.

When he would have asked what it was I had learned, I put him off by saying there was no time in which to repeat the words; but begged that he with me strive to find young Chris, so we three together might make some move toward getting away without arousing suspicion.

No less than ten minutes were spent in finding the baker's son, for both Timothy and I were forced

now and then to cease the search in order to wait upon some impatient guest who demanded our services; but finally we three were come together near the rear of the house, where none save the upper servants might know we were neglecting our duties.

I had just began to explain to young Chris why I believed we should run the risk of leaving Master Wharton's grounds without delay, when suddenly from the direction of the city came the long alarm roll, as a glare of light burst up from half a dozen sections at the same instant.

My heart came into my throat, so to speak, for there could be but one explanation for all this.

Our army of rag-tag and bobtail, as the lobster-backs were pleased to call the "rebels," had made an attack, and now was come the time, so I said to myself, when the Britishers would find out of what metal we were made.

I was not the only one who believed that the American army had at last come out from its hole, as Major Simcoe said in derision, for every lobster-back at the carnival was seized with what might well be called a panic.

There were hurryings to and fro, and shouts for the privates who were on guard at every part of the grounds; cries from one to another while the half-intoxicated lobster-backs tried to come together, as if believing it was necessary to defend themselves.

In fact, confusion reigned, and all this time could we see in the direction, as it appeared to me, nearabout Chestnut and High streets, at what I judged were the outposts, flashes of light as if the buildings were in flames.

It is impossible for me to give a very clear ac-

count of just what I did see and hear at the time, for I was so excited, so wrought up in the hope, and the belief, that at last our people were making a bold attack, I was more like one in a fever than a lad who has been engaged in a service which requires that he shall keep his head steady.

"Our people have made an attack upon the lobster-backs at last!" young Chris cried, clutching my arm, and on the instant I clapped my hand over his mouth, for there were servants standing nearby who, overhearing his words, would understand that we were not there by right, and mayhap we might be taken prisoners even at the very moment of what seemed to be our triumph.

It was Timothy Bowers who gathered his scattered wits more quickly than any of us three, and coming so close to Chris and me that his face almost touched ours, he said excitedly:

"There is no question whatsoever but that our people are making an attack, and it stands us in hand to get out of here as soon as may be. Perchance the opportunity will come when we can be of more assistance to the Cause than idling around here with a party of drunken Britishers."

Whether we might be of assistance or not, I understood full well that this was the moment when we must make our escape from Master Wharton's house, otherwise we might find it difficult to explain our sudden going.

As the confusion increased, the officers running to and fro giving orders to the guards, and at the same time striving to prevent the ladies from understanding that danger threatened, no one was near at hand to give much heed to us, therefore it was I said quickly, stripping off the foolish garments I

wore without making any attempt to undo the fastenings properly:

"Get out of these fanciful rags as quickly as may be, and follow me!"

Even as I spoke had I torn from my person all that regalia of the carnival, and started at full speed in as direct a line as possible for the flames which I could see shooting up toward the sky, as it appeared to me, in almost every direction for a distance of four or five squares.

As a matter of course Timothy and young Chris followed close at my heels, and, fortunately for us, those of the lobster-backs who were setting out were too much excited, too thoroughly overcome by the copious draughts of wine they had drank, to give any heed whatsoever to matters save such as concerned their precious selves.

Verily I believe at that moment every blessed one of the king's gang fancied the moment had come when he must stand up against our rag-tag and bobtail, and battle for his life.

Never before nor since have I been so excited and exultant as when I ran with all swiftness, expecting to find the Britishers drawn up in battle array, as indeed we did see them later, and believing that now was come the time when we of Philadelphia might pay back in the same coin we had received, some of that debt owed to those who made up the king's army.

We gave no heed to that which was immediately before us; but rather kept our eyes fixed upon those long tongues of flame darting heavenward, which to us were tokens of greatest hope.

When we were come well toward Walnut and

Front streets, I was suddenly seized by some person who darted from out the shadow of the buildings nearby, and brought to a standstill so suddenly, that but for the grip of the stranger upon my coat I should have fallen to the ground.

For an instant, I believed, and with good reason, that it was one of the lobster-backs, who, having learned what we had ventured upon that day, was making a capture on his own account.

I would have cried out to warn my comrades; but they, so swift was their pace, came full upon me, staggering from the impact as our bodies met, and at the same instant I got a fair view of him who held me.

Then all my fear was changed to rejoicing, for it was none other than the Weaver of Germantown who had thus made me prisoner.

"What is it? What is it?" I asked excitedly. "Have our people made an attack?"

"I am inclined to believe it is nothing more than a feint; but for what purpose I fail to understand. However, lads, it has come to us in a good moment, and it would seem that Providence is on our side, else I would not have met you. When the first alarm was given I set off to seek you, and lo and behold you come into my very arms, as it were. Now is the time when we may accomplish that which a twelve-hours ago seemed well-nigh impossible."

"Accomplish what?" young Chris cried excitedly. "Is it true that we may be able to help our army?"

But for his haste and excitement I believe the Weaver of Germantown would have laughed aloud,

and with good reason, at the idea of Chris's that we lads might help those brave fellows who, perhaps, had come down from Valley Forge.

However, the minutes were too precious to admit of anything in the way of levity, and he brought me to a sense of the situation with the same suddenness that one who is heated receives a shock when he plunges into cold water, for he said sharply and yet in a guarded tone:

"Now, if ever, is the moment when we may be able to help those lads who are imprisoned. The Britishers are fearing for their own safety. Every man who wears a red coat, save those who are on guard in different parts of the city, and very like many of them, will rush immediately to the outposts, believing an attack is imminent. If so be we are inclined to take many chances, I am of the mind that it will be possible to do very much toward showing your comrades we have not forgotten them."

It was like laying a hot iron on a fresh wound, these words of his, so far as I was concerned, for on the instant I was aflame, and it seemed to me there was nothing, howsoever venturesome, I would not dare upon just at that moment.

Instead of stopping to make any explanation, or lay any plans, the Weaver of Germantown, pulling me sharply around by the arm, said in a tone of command:

"Now lead the way, lad, to that corner of the work-house wall which you are able to scale, and lose no time about it."

He need not have added these last words, for with the possibility in my mind that I might take part in the freeing of Jeremy and Sam, nothing

short of strength greater than mine could have prevented my going forward at the best pace of which I was capable, and there is little need for me to say that both young Chris and Timothy were equally eager to carry out this attempt, if so be it might be made.

It seemed to me I had never before moved so sluggishly; my desire was so far in excess of ability, that it was as if my feet were glued to the streets, and yet I dare say never before had I run so swiftly.

The confusion round about us increased rather than diminished. Here, there, and everywhere, I might say, could be heard the tramp of feet as the lobster-backs were being rushed to the scene of apparent danger, and we might have boldly proclaimed that we were the lads whom General Howe was eager to hold as prisoners, without anyone giving the slightest heed to us.

Excited though I was, and reaching out in my mind so eagerly toward those imprisoned comrades of ours, I could hardly repress a smile and a certain desire to give vent to cheers, as I saw that the lobster-backs, although outnumbering by three to one our so-called rag-tag and bobtail of an army, were thoroughly alarmed now that there seemed a possibility they might be called upon to stand face to face with them.

It had been the boast of all those red-coated officers whom I had heard talking, that their one aim was to come up with General Washington's imitation army in order to show what British regulars could do, and now the opportunity was seemingly theirs, they were overwhelmed with fear.

One might almost fancy that the braggarts were trembling, despite the Dutch courage they had im-

bibed during the evening, as they ran here and there, some of them aimlessly as it seemed to me; but all incited by the same thought, that those poor wretches who had starved and been half frozen at Valley Forge during the winter, were come to make reprisals.

I dare venture to say that as I led the way to the work-house adjoining the prison, I took the most direct course possible, never deviating so much as one yard from a straight line, save, as a matter of course, where the buildings forced us to make a detour here and there. Across yards, down alleys, and whichever way I knew to be the nearest, for all this part of the city was as familiar to me, and to my comrades who were following, as was any room in our homes, we ran at our best speed.

When, finally, we were come to that place at the wall of which I had told the Weaver of Germantown, the flames were yet soaring skyward, although the tumult in the streets had decreased to a certain extent because the hurrying lobster-backs were already out of earshot.

Never a living being, inside or outside the prison or the work-house, was to be seen.

There were lights in the upper part of the building where we had been told Jeremy and Sam were held prisoners; but no token of life other than that could we see or hear.

"Now is the time when one of you lads must make the venture in order to learn whether the rest of us can safely follow," the Weaver of Germantown whispered hurriedly. "Whosoever is most familiar with the wall, and the yard inside, shall go ahead, and if he comes not into danger, then will the rest follow. If peradventure he finds himself

SCALING THE JAIL WALL.

in the clutches of a guard, then must he give the alarm by screaming loudly, and we shall have failed even to the extent of giving the lobster-backs a third prisoner."

If he had other to say, I did not wait to hear it. Knowing full well how I could scale that stone wall, I started upward, giving no heed that the crumbling fragments of stone tore the skin from my hands until they were bleeding.

Having come to the top, I was too greatly excited to look down in order to make certain whether the coast was clear; but immediately allowed myself to drop inside, and not until then did I wait to learn whether I might have given an alarm.

Save for the distant hum where the lobster-backs were gathering, I heard nothing. So far as any token of life was concerned, the building which served General Howe as an additional prison for us rebels, might have been tenantless; but, and this question came into my mind almost on the instant that I looked around me and learned that there were no guards near at hand, how might we come at the prisoners even though we were inside the walls?

If that which had been learned was true, they were confined in the upper story, and unless peradventure we were bold enough to make our way directly up the stairs through the main door, then I saw no way of effecting our purpose.

Even while I stood gazing with dismay at the gloomy building, and wondering in which part of it our comrades were confined, something pliable struck me a sharp blow on the arm, and, turning quickly, alarmed, I saw dangling from the top of the wall a thin rope.

Afterward, when we had finished this adventure, I learned that the Weaver of Germantown had some time before counted on making the attempt of gaining the work-house yard in the same manner which we were now doing, and began his preparations by having prepared for him two coils of thin, stout rope which he could carry readily concealed about his person.

It was not needed anyone should tell me what to do when I saw that length of line dangling from the top of the wall, swaying to and fro like a writhing serpent.

On the instant I laid hold of it, placing my feet against the stone-work, for I understood full well that those who were on the other side would use this to aid them in scaling the wall.

I had hardly put my weight upon the rope when it was pulled violently, and I forced to exert all my strength in order to hold it steady.

Then I saw a figure above, which I knew to be none other than the Weaver of Germantown, and when he had come down to stand beside me, young Chris followed. A few seconds later Timothy Bowers did the same, and we four were standing within the shadow of the wall, turning our faces mutely toward the man on whom we relied for instruction.

"One of you will remain here in order to hold steady this rope, and help whosoever may come out, to scale the wall," the Weaver of Germantown whispered cautiously; but so that we all might hear the words. "Another will stand by the main door to give warning if any approach from the street, while the third is to follow me."

"And how do you count on gaining entrance to

the work-house?" I asked in surprise, whereupon he replied in a matter-of-fact tone, as if it was a simple matter thus to venture where, in his case at least, capture meant death:

"We shall never again have such an opportunity as this. I am counting that all those who were left on guard have gone out into the street to learn the reason for the alarm, or are in the prison building. Therefore is it in my mind to walk boldly inside. If peradventure we come upon the enemy, then it will be a case of endeavoring to the utmost to make our escape, and, failing, yield ourselves as prisoners, with the knowledge that we were taken in a good cause, for surely he who fails while trying to aid a friend cannot charge himself with foolhardiness."

CHAPTER X

IN THE LION'S MOUTH

DURING all this time of excitement, which began with the seeming attack upon the British lines, I had entirely forgotten that information which I gathered at the carnival.

Now, however, when we were about to venture into the lion's mouth, as you might say, it came upon me like a flash, and with it the belief that I should immediately tell the Weaver of Germantown what I had heard; but yet, while the words were trembling on my lips, I held my peace.

At the same instant there came to me the thought that if peradventure this man believed the information of such great moment that our people at Valley Forge should hear of it without delay, he might, instead of going on with this attempt to aid our imprisoned comrades, consider it his duty to turn about and lose no time in reaching the American lines.

Therefore it was I showed myself very nearly a traitor to the Cause, for the imprisonment, or even the life, of my two comrades might be as nothing compared with the possible advantage to the colonies which would come with the repeating of those words I had overhead.

When it was all over, and I had time to think calmly of my course, I gave to myself no little blame for not having told the Weaver of Germantown, when we first met him, all that I heard.

However, I did not, and, fortunately, as it turned out, no particular harm was done.

You can well fancy that I did not loiter in the yard speculating upon these things, for the Weaver of Germantown had given us no opportunity for idling. That which I have set down concerning what I ought to have done came into my mind like a flash, and as a flash dies out, so did that go from me until, even though it might be called much the same as treason, I gave no further heed to the matter.

And now that which I have to tell sounds at this day, even in my own ears, much like a fanciful tale rather than a statement of fact; but yet there was good reason why our adventure proved to be a simple one.

The Britishers were frightened well-nigh out of their wits, and instead of thinking that they must care for the prisoners, seemingly gave no heed to anything save the safety of their own precious bodies.

We left Timothy Bowers on guard at the rope with orders to keep his ears wide open for the sound of approaching footsteps. Then, when we were come to the main entrance of the building, the Weaver of Germantown turned to young Chris, taking him firmly by the shoulders as if to make the lad understand that the command which he was giving must be obeyed without a question, and whispered sharply:

"You are to stand here, lad, until either we return, or you have good proof of our having been taken prisoners. Keep your wits well about you. At the first token that any approaches, either from the prison side or the street, open this door and

cry out at the full strength of your lungs, after which it shall be your purpose to save yourself by going over the wall with the aid of the rope, or in whatsoever way seems best at the moment."

Then he opened the door, which strangely enough had been left unfastened, and walked inside as if simply visiting a friend, I following him as can well be fancied, keeping so close to his heels that he could not have taken a step backward without treading on my toes.

The passage-ways were lighted by candles, and I saw on every side doors which were closed, but evidently led into those rooms serving as guard-houses for the lobster-backs who had infringed some of his majesty's rules regarding the conduct of soldiers who wore red coats.

There was little time, however, for me to give heed to the immediate surroundings. The Weaver of Germantown continued straight on up the stairs as if he knew exactly where it was needed he should go, and, having gained the second story without hearing or seeing any sign of life, began trying those doors which led to the rooms at the rear of the building, at the same time speaking through the keyholes sufficiently loud for the inmates to hear:

"If the lads who are Minute Boys be confined here, let them give some token."

Three times was this repeated at these several doors, and each instant I stood trembling in my shoes, expecting that from below, or out of one of the many rooms, would appear the lobster-back whom one might suppose had remained on guard; and then came from the inside of the third apartment a voice which I knew to be Jeremy's:

"Have our people taken the city?"

Instead of making reply to this question, the Weaver of Germantown set his shoulder against the door, motioning for me to do the same, and then it was that I saw the man exert an amount of strength which seems almost incredible.

At the second attempt he shattered the barrier, carrying away lock and bolt, as a matter of course, and making so much of a tumult, that if there had been any lobster-back inside the building he must have understood what was going on.

No one appeared to oppose us; no word was heard from the lower story, or from any of the other rooms, when I, following the Weaver of Germantown, after the door was broken in, seized Jeremy around the neck, kissing him much as I might have kissed my mother; Sam meanwhile pressing closely, asking, as I dimly understood, a multitude of questions as to how we had come there and what was the meaning of the tumult abroad.

The man who had served us such a good turn in thus coming at the prisoners, was not inclined to allow us to linger in the work-house, nor did I have any desire so to do.

He literally shoved Jeremy and Sam, together with me, out into the passage, and then made his way down the stairs at a swift pace, while we followed, for to have loitered a single instant there would have been worse than folly.

At each step we took toward freedom I believed we must of necessity come upon some of the enemy, for it did not seem possible, and even now appears most improbable, that we could have done all which we did.

We came down the stairs into the main passage, out of the door at which young Chris was standing guard, and then, if you will believe me, the Weaver of Germantown went directly to the main gate, where he found free exit, for whosoever had been on guard and ran out when the alarm that the Americans were come had been given, did not take the trouble to fasten the barrier behind him.

Instead of climbing over the wall by the rope, and thereby spending many precious moments, we might have marched directly in as if we were welcome visitors, gone about our business, and come out even as we did without a scratch and without hurrying.

There was little need to summon Timothy, for, seeing us open the gate, he came quickly forward, and we six went out into the street free, even though we were in the midst of all that British army.

We had released two of General Howe's prisoners without turning a hair, and now it only remained that we should find some hiding place.

As may be supposed, the Weaver of Germantown led us by the nearest course to the Jolly Tar inn, save when one of us lads suggested that we go through this alley or across that yard in order to avoid the possibility of coming upon some of the lobster-backs; and yet we need not have been afraid that they would be met, for every blessed one of those who had come from overseas to flog us into loving the king, was gathered nearby where it was supposed our American army was drawn up in line of battle.

Even while we ran the rattle of musketry began, and if anything had been needed to strengthen my

belief that a battle was near at hand, that would have been sufficient.

I quickened my pace sufficiently to overtake the Weaver of Germantown, who was a short distance in advance of me, and, clutching him by the arm, asked if it were not better we should go where our people were doubtless making a brave effort to whip the enemy.

But he said curtly, and as if he no longer had very much care regarding what was being done:

"Even though we should approach directly to the line of battle which the Britishers have doubtless formed, it would be impossible to come at our people. The one duty just now is to ourselves, and we can only perform it by getting under cover."

Not until we were come to the Jolly Tar, and had reconnoitred by going to the rear of the building and looking through the windows to make certain there were no patrons inside, did we hear the fusillade from where the flames were shooting up.

Then Master Targe opened the door to give us admittance, and his house looked just at that time as if it was barricaded, he having piled the furniture against the doors on the inside as if expecting an attack.

The sounds of the battle continued; but before we were again in that room where I had first seen the Weaver of Germantown, the commotion died away, the flames subsided, and it was as if whatsoever had been begun was at an end.

"Have our people been whipped?" Timothy asked in a tone of fear, as the door was closed behind us and Master Targe went down the stairs to put his tavern in a state of defence once more,

and the Weaver of Germantown replied laughingly:

"I am of the opinion they were not there to be beaten, lad. Our people knew full well of this carnival which was being held, and it is in my mind that some of the younger blood have taken advantage of the opportunity to give the Britishers a scare, in which verily they have succeeded."

It may be as well here for me to explain at once, and without waiting for that day when we learned the particulars, all that had occurred which was so greatly to the advantage of Jeremy and Sam.

It appears that Colonel Allen McLane, who was of General Lafayette's force that had come to Barren Hill, decided to break up the entertainment without very much of danger to himself or to his men, and, as has been seen, he succeeded most gloriously.

With one hundred and fifty soldiers in four divisions, and supported by Clow's dragoons, those brave fellows came, each carrying a camp-kettle filled with light wood on which pitch and tar had been smeared, down to the first line of British defences.

There was set on fire the fuel which had been brought, and the men remained sufficiently long to make reply to the first volley which the frightened red-coats fired at random.

It was only a prank, and verily our men, after their long time of suffering at Valley Forge, had earned the right to indulge in a little sport, more particularly when they could have the intense satisfaction of seeing all General Howe's supposedly brave troops show the white feather as it had been displayed that night.

It was all a bit of sport, as I have said, and yet nothing save a general attack of our people upon the enemy could have served Jeremy and Sam such a good turn. But even that opportunity would have been lost except for the Weaver of Germantown, who understood on the instant what might be done, and who was enabled, under Providence, to come upon us when he had little or no definite idea as to where we might be found.

Whenever I am low-spirited, or inclined to believe that Fortune has dealt hardly with me, I look back upon that night, remembering what grew out of the prank which Colonel McLane played upon the lobster-backs, and then realize full well that howsoever far we are from deserving favors, there is above us all a loving care which, finally, if we give it the chance, leads us into the right way and to our own safety.

As a matter of course, we had made no attempt at conversing one with another while making our way from the work-house to the inn; but once inside the building our tongues were unloosened, as Jeremy and Sam insisted upon our giving a detailed account of what had happened since they were taken prisoners.

"It is you rather than we who should play the part of story-tellers," I said, feeling so overjoyed at our wondrous success that it was with difficulty I could restrain from embracing each of the dear lads in turn, and thereby showing myself a veritable simple. "What we are burning to know is how you chanced to have fallen into the clutches of the lobster-backs, and allowed Skinny Baker to go free?"

"It wasn't with our permission that he went

free," Jeremy replied laughingly, and young Chris asked sharply, as if minded at this time of great joy to find serious fault with those whom we had rescued:

"How then did it chance that the lobster-backs came upon you? Surely it must have been through some carelessness of your own."

"If anyone is to be blamed in the matter, it is you, Chris Ludwig!" Sam cried sharply. "We might have stayed there holding Skinny a prisoner until this time, save for that unruly tongue of yours."

"Me?" Chris cried in surprise and anger. "What did I have to do with it? I was at Valley Forge when you allowed yourselves to be taken."

"Ay, that you were; but before going you told Mark Duren that we were counting on raising a company of Minute Boys, and in your eagerness to get recruits, even went so far as to tell him of our rendezvous, explaining how he might make his way through the timbers to come at us."

"And why shouldn't I tell him?" young Chris cried, growing yet more angry. "He is one who favors the Cause, and showed himself most willing to join us."

"When has he ever favored the Cause? You knew, or should have known, that he was a close comrade of Skinny Baker's, and when that young Tory was missing, Mark went directly to Master Baker, reporting to him that which you had said. There is no need of further explanations, for even though Skinny's father be a Tory, he is not a fool, and straightway, after hearing what Mark had to tell, he asked for a squad of lobster-backs to aid him. The first information we had that you were so incautious as to reveal our hiding place,

was when Master Baker himself appeared, followed by two red-coats."

"Didn't you hear them coming?" Timothy asked, and Jeremy replied sadly:

"Ay, lad, we did, and believed it was Richard Salter and young Chris, therefore stood ready to welcome them, rather than taking heed to our defence. Even then, but for Skinny himself, we might have escaped, perhaps by leaping into the river; but the currish Tory threw himself in our way, and betwixt him and his father we were speedily made helpless."

On hearing this story I blamed myself even more than young Chris, for, knowing the lad as I did, it should have been my one aim to prevent him from going out while he was so excited over the matter of raising recruits for the Minute Boys. I ought to have known he would have done just the same foolish thing which he did, thus bringing Jeremy and Sam to grief.

At almost any other time I would have read young Chris a lesson which he would not speedily have forgotten, because of what he had done; but at this moment, when our comrades were with us once more after having been literally plucked from out the lion's mouth, my joy and relief was so great that I could not have found fault or spoken a harsh word to my bitterest enemy.

I believed the others felt much as I did, and young Chris, who now understood what a serious injury he had done his friends, took refuge in what was very like a fit of sulks, throwing himself on the floor in one corner of the room as if he no longer desired to hold converse with us.

During a full minute the silence was most pain-

ful, for we realized how greatly one of our Minute Boys had sinned against the Cause, and yet no lad felt inclined to say aught concerning his crime.

It was during this time of silence that again I remembered what had been overheard during my service as servant at the carnival, and straightway I repeated, so far as was possible, exactly the words which I heard from the lobster-backs, the Weaver of Germantown showing by the expression on his face that he considered my information of greatest value.

"Verily much has been accomplished within the last four and twenty hours," the man said in the tone of one who is deeply impressed, when I had come to the end of my story, and I ventured to ask:

"Then you think that which I heard is of importance?"

"Ay, lad, of such vital importance that this night the six of us shall set out, each going by a different route, in an attempt to gain Barren Hill before daylight, in order to let General Lafayette know what he may expect."

"But why should each go by a different way?" Sam asked curiously, and the Weaver of Germantown replied gravely:

"Because, lad, after such a scare as the Britishers have had this night, I am of the opinion that we shall be more closely shut in than ever before. Even though they had not been nearly frightened out of their wits, General Howe or General Clinton is good soldier enough to understand that this is the time when they must guard closely against such people as we are striving to be, lest word be

carried to the rebels. It is more than likely some of us will be taken prisoners in the effort to leave the town, and therefore would I have it that each goes in his own way, without taking counsel of the others, to the end that one, if not more, may succeed in carrying the message. Now then, Richard Salter, repeat again that which you heard, and each of you lads, including you, Master Ludwig, listen intently, so that you may impress it upon your memory, for we may not safely set down in writing the information we carry."

Then it was that I told again, and in the fewest possible words, what I had heard while serving the lobster-backs during the carnival, and each of my comrades, including young Chris, listened with such eagerness that one might know by the expression on their faces how hard every one was striving to remember all I said.

Having come to an end of the story, I, without giving due heed to the words, asked Jeremy Hapgood how he counted on gaining Barren Hill, whereupon the Weaver of Germantown interrupted us quickly, as he said:

"Nay, nay, lads, none of that! I would have each of you go independently, not knowing what the others may do, to the end that we shall have the more chance of succeeding in our mission, for I give you my solemn word that at no time in your lives, however long you may stay on this earth, will you be charged with so much of vital importance to those who love the colonies."

Then, when we would have lingered, the spy forced us out of the room, saying as he did so:

"Waste not one single second; but from this moment until you can have had speech with Gen-

eral Lafayette's force, bend every effort to getting within our lines."

He himself set the example by going to the lower floor, where during two or three minutes he held a whispered consultation with Master Targe, we lads standing back meanwhile, for it was evident he had no mind we should hear that which he said.

The innkeeper himself opened the door for us, and as I passed through, following directly behind the Weaver of Germantown, this surly-visaged landlord clapped me on the shoulder in a most friendly fashion.

I can conceive of nothing which would have given me a more vivid idea of the danger attending this attempt, than that act of his, for it was so little in accord with his general manner that at the moment it seemed almost as if he was bidding me good-bye forever.

Perhaps it was well I should have had this reminder of what lay before me, for if I had previously been inclined to carelessness, of a verity now were my wits quickened. Waiting not to learn what my comrades might do, I set off, counting to go by the way of Southwark in the belief that through that section of the town I could pass with less of danger.

Understanding that it would be impossible for me to travel at a rapid pace all night, I strove to husband my strength, walking at a fairly good gait; but without striving to make too much speed at the outset.

That I was wise in thus planning to go from Philadelphia by a roundabout way was speedily shown. Those revellers who had been at the carnival were

yet at the place where Colonel McLane had made his feint, less than half a dozen having returned to quiet the alarm of the ladies, and I made my way directly past Master Wharton's mansion, or counted on so doing, when I came upon two horses fastened to the fence of the back yard nearabout where Chris, Timothy and I had made our entrance.

By their accoutrements I knew they were animals belonging to some of the British officers, and while one might have counted ten I stood gazing at them enviously. Then came into my mind what seemed little less than an inspiration, although it was no more than that old adage:

"As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb."

If I was caught striving to gain the American lines just at that time, then was death certain. They could do no more than hang me if, while trying to perform this duty, I stole a horse, although under all the circumstances I did not give to it the name of stealing, for this was indeed war, and to gain the better of an enemy by getting from him the means of transportation to carry an important message is anything rather than theft.

You may well fancy that I did not stand many seconds within a stone's throw of Master Wharton's house, which was yet reasonably well thronged with ladies, turning all this matter over in my mind.

Immediately I saw the steeds, and the idea came to me of what great advantage it would be if I were mounted, not only in enabling me to gain Barren Hill at an earlier hour, but also in event of pursuit to make my escape, I quickly unfastened the bridle of that beast which seemingly was the better fitted for a long journey.

Then I slowly led him out through the thicket into a path of which I had long known, that ran straight away into the road I would take.

Having gone an hundred yards or more thus cautiously, I vaulted into the saddle, and once there urged the animal into a gallop.

There was in my mind such a sense of triumph because of having thus succeeded in making it possible to gain the American forces while it was yet time, that I had real difficulty in preventing myself from crying aloud with joy.

I said over and over again in my mind that now was it positive I would outstrip all those who were bent on the same mission, even including the Weaver of Germantown, who, because of his longer experience, should have been able to go to and fro between Philadelphia and the American lines more quickly than one who had only done so a single time.

In fact, I was so puffed up with pride over what was no more than an accident, and looked upon it as if this gaining a steed for my purpose was something due to my own wondrous abilities, that I failed to take any heed whatsoever to what should have ever been in mind — the fact that I was in the enemy's country, and more closely surrounded by lobster-backs on this night, because of the alarm which had been raised, than at almost any other time since the Britishers occupied the city.

However, I was brought to a realization of the situation and of my own foolishness in striving to take credit to myself, before I had gone half a mile from Master Wharton's country house.

I gained the main road, and the beast which I bestrode had settled himself down into a long,

swinging gallop as if understanding that considerable of a journey lay before him, when suddenly there came from a cross road, or lane, the sound of horses' feet coming rapidly toward me. Before I had time to fully realize the situation, a voice shouted out that I should halt or he would fire.

I was not so thick-headed as to fail of realizing on the instant that I would be in no greater danger by continuing on regardless of the summons, than if I stopped and gave the enemy an opportunity of finding out who I was.

If they fired, and with true aim, then might I come to my death. But if I was taken by them at that time, astride a horse belonging to a British officer and headed straight away for the American lines, then there could be no question as to how I would go out of the world, and but little doubt as to its being a speedy exit.

Therefore it was that, bending low in the saddle, I urged the horse on to yet greater speed, and had the beast loved the colonies as did I, and hated the king with equal fervor, he could not have responded more quickly or more gamely.

At almost the same instant when the horse increased his pace, I involuntarily glanced over my shoulder just as half a dozen flashes of light illumined the foliage nearby, and I heard the whistling of bullets over my head as the reports of the weapons rang out.

I fail even now to understand why it chanced I was really so brave at that time. There was not in my mind any thought of injury to myself, or fear that I might be hurt; but all my anxiety was lest they cripple the gallant beast that was bearing

me onward so swiftly, and I literally held my breath while striving to discover from his stride or movements whether he had been wounded.

Fortunately, however, I could see no difference after this volley which had been fired at comparatively short range, for the beast was running swiftly, and with every evidence of strength, as if this night-race pleased him hugely.

Now it was I turned my head to gain some idea of the pursuers, and could see even amid the gloom that there were not less than six or seven horsemen in the rear who were seemingly mounted as well as I. There was in my mind the fancy it was possible for me to make out that they all wore uniforms. At least, I heard the clank of swords in the scabbards, and knew that none of our people would be so accoutred while in the city of Philadelphia, therefore even though the volley which had been fired at me was not sufficient indication of their character, I had an exceedingly good idea it was General Howe's men who were pursuing.

That it would be a long race I made no question, for we all seemingly rode good horses. In fact, it made little difference to me how long they kept up the pursuit, so that I was enabled to remain in the lead until having come within hail of General Lafayette's outposts.

There was no speculation in my mind as to why these horsemen were in that vicinity just then. I was not so thick-headed as to fail of understanding that on the night before an important move was to be made, and particularly within a few hours after the lobster-backs had good proof the Americans were not all dead, an unusually strict watch would

be kept to prevent any from leaving the city, therefore was it reasonable to suppose those whom I had thus unfortunately come upon were patrolling this side of the town.

"Even though they do me harm, I shall be the the means of luring them away from their post of duty," I said to myself with grim satisfaction. "And if perchance one of the other lads attempts to make his way out of the city over this same route, then, although I fail, have I been of some service."

I believe we had been going at racing speed no less than ten minutes when a single shot rang out clear and distinct on the night air; but I failed to hear the whistling of the missile, nor did I feel any token from the horse that he had been injured.

Therefore it was I could almost have laughed aloud in joy because they were endeavoring to shoot me, since it showed, to my mind at least, that they had grave doubts whether it would be possible to overtake me, and were come to understand that their only hope was in crippling the steed.

Twice within the next five minutes did the report of firearms come to my ears, after which I fancied that I had gained a considerable distance on my pursuers, although as to that I could not be certain, for their horses were yet running fresh and strong, as was mine, and one may not safely judge of distances in the gloom.

By this time the fellows chasing me knew beyond peradventure that I was striving to gain the American lines, and realizing this, they understood, unless indeed they had been veritable simples, that

I was carrying important information to that ragtag and bobtail of an army of which they had so lately shown themselves afraid.

Therefore it was that they would spare no effort to overtake me; but while the pace was so hot there was little chance they could shoot with any accuracy of aim. The greatest danger, as it appeared to me just then, was that by some unfortunate accident their bullets might go in the direction they desired, and the chase come to an end because of the wounding or killing of the horse I rode.

CHAPTER XI

AT BARREN HILL

I AM not of a mind to dwell very long on this night chase, although to me it was most exciting; but if I should attempt to set down all I thought or said to myself while the Britishers were so close in the rear and firing a shot now and then, verily do I believe I might never come to an end of my story.

During the first half-hour, mayhap, the lobster-backs held the pace fairly well; but at the end of that time I understood they were falling behind, and it was no fancy of mine, although again and again I said to myself that I must be mistaken owing to the darkness.

Finally, when it seemed to me I had ridden a full six hours, although it could not have been one-third that time, they disappeared from view in the distance; but whether I had so far outstripped them, or because of their having turned back, I could not say.

However, I was not disposed to take any chances on the matter, but continued to keep my horse well in hand, although I slackened the pace to a slow trot that he might have opportunity to regain his breath, and all the while listened intently for any token that those whom I had distanced were inclined to continue yet further in the chase.

When another ten minutes had passed we were

come to a small brook, and I was sufficiently bold to make a halt there, stopping long enough to give the faithful beast a few mouthfuls of water. Then, remounting, I set off at a fairly good pace once more; but came to a halt very suddenly within the next quarter of an hour, for I heard the footfalls of horses in the distance ahead of me.

While one might have counted twenty I remained in painful suspense, fearing the enemy had already started for Barren Hill and I was coming upon some messengers who had been sent back to Philadelphia.

I might have known full well, however, that if I left the city before the soldiers set off, then there were none ahead of me, for there were few horses in the town that could have traveled faster than the one I bestrode.

During a few seconds I hesitated, questioning whether it would not be better to strike across through the shrubbery, rather than take the chances of meeting whosoever was riding toward me.

Then came the realization that any who were approaching from that direction must of necessity be friends, and I held the road until coming within sight of two mounted men who were riding at a reasonably rapid pace straight toward me.

As a matter of course they pulled up on finding that I held the middle of the road, and one of them asked sharply:

"Who have we here? Who comes from the direction of Philadelphia? Be you friend to the colonies, or the king?"

"My name is Richard Salter; my mother that widow who keeps a lodging house in Drinker's Alley, and if there be in this country a friend to

the colonies, then am I he, for within the past two or three days have I taken my life in my hands, as you might say, in order to do somewhat of good for the Cause."

"It is plainly evident that you have a very good idea of your importance and of your abilities," one of the horsemen said with a laugh which nettled me sorely, and I might have made some reply that would not have been to my credit, but for the second stranger, who said in a somewhat friendly tone:

"Perhaps it would be better, young master, if you told us why you are coming from Philadelphia at such an hour."

"I am riding to General Lafayette at Barren Hill."

"How knew you General Lafayette was at Barren Hill?" the man asked sharply, now reining his horse in to my side and grasping the bridle as if he fancied I might make some effort to escape.

Whereupon I replied, speaking curtly, because I was by no means pleased with his tone and manner:

"I had it from some British officers at the carnival which was held in Master Wharton's country house. Through the Weaver of Germantown were I and my comrades able to appear there as servants that we might pick up whatsoever of information was to be gained."

"The Weaver of Germantown!" the first horseman exclaimed, as if right well pleased to hear that I had had aught to do with that man. "And you learned that General Lafayette had gone to Barren Hill?"

"Ay, not only that; but I heard the plans discussed for making an attack upon him within the next four and twenty hours. Already, most like,

are three divisions of troops leaving Philadelphia, one of them led by Sir Henry Clinton. Lord Howe is so positive he will take General Lafayette prisoner 'twixt now and another sunset, that he has invited his friends to sup with him when the Frenchman shall be in his possession and on exhibition, as you might say."

"And you heard all this important matter at the carnival?" the second horseman asked as if doubting that I could have learned so much in so public a place, and I replied, not a little nettled because they seemingly questioned my word:

"As one of the attendants, I was waiting upon three officers who were drinking more than was well for them, and the matter was discussed without any attempt at privacy. They most likely believed I was only a servant who would understand nothing whatsoever of military matters, even when they spoke plainly."

"And having heard this, what then?" the first rider cried, as if impatient to get at the end of my story.

"Then came the alarm at the outposts, when it seemed certain the Americans were attacking the city, and we lads had opportunity to go where we knew it would be possible to find the Weaver of Germantown; but he had it in mind that we might be needing him, therefore met us on the way. Whereupon we took advantage of the opportunity to release two of our comrades who were in the work-house as prisoners. Straightway that was done, he sent each of us by a different road to get the information which I had learned, to General Lafayette. I fancy I am ahead of them all, having had the good fortune to come upon this horse which

was hitched in front of Master Wharton's house, where his owner, most like, was paying court to some of the lady guests who yet remained there."

Surely these men showed themselves to be inquisitive, for even now when I had told all my story, they questioned me yet further, as if every little detail was of the greatest importance, and I chafing all the while at the delay, because I believed every moment would be precious to General Lafayette.

Therefore it was, when they asked concerning matters which it appeared to me had no connection with the Cause, or what might be done at once near about Barren Hill, I said sharply:

"If you have learned all you desire, gentlemen, allow me to ride on, for it seems that duty requires I should have speech with General Lafayette immediately."

"And so you should, my lad," one of the men replied, speaking heartily and in a most friendly tone. "We had no right to detain you so long, although I fancy that because of your having made so quick a journey, we shall arrive in ample time."

"*We* shall arrive," I repeated, whereupon he said, and I fancied that he smiled:

"Ay, lad, for it is our intent to go with you, else might there be a long delay in your gaining speech with the General. We had been sent on matters of little importance to New Jersey; but that which you tell us seems to make it appear as if our services are needed here more than there."

Having said this the speaker wheeled his horse around sharply, and started off at a smart pace, I following him and understanding from the sounds which came that the second horseman was close in my rear.

Now it was that these strangers whom I had overtaken no longer gave any evidence of inquisitiveness. It seemed as if they had finally begun to understand how necessary it was we reach General Lafayette with the least delay, and never a word was spoken as we three, riding at racing speed now that the horses had had time to breathe, continued on until the faint ray of light in the eastern sky told that the day when General Howe counted to vanquish and capture General Lafayette was dawning.

Then, suddenly, the stranger who was riding in advance pulled up quickly, and I saw that one of our soldiers barred the way, while near at hand I fancied it was possible to see just within the thicket half a dozen more, therefore did I know we were come to the American outposts.

The horseman spoke a few words to the sentinel, and again pressed on, I following his example as a matter of course, and holding my eyes wide open for any token of our people.

It was not necessary that I watch very closely. Even though the numbers of the "rebels" were small, they were exceeding active, and, after having passed this outpost, we came upon squads or companies of men moving hither and thither as if some important movement was about to be executed.

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask of one or the other of these men whom I had met, what might be afoot; but they gave me no opportunity.

Each appeared eager to arrive at headquarters, and when we were come there verily was I amazed, for this French officer who had come overseas to aid us in fighting the king, was quartered in what appeared to be a little better than a hut.

It was, as I saw when the day was fully come, a

small, rude farm-house, and as we came upon it just in the grey of dawn, sentries were pacing sleepily to and fro, while from the general air of those whom we saw, it was positive the Frenchman was not borrowing any very grave trouble concerning what the Britishers might do.

Considerable talk on the part of the two men who had come with me, was necessary before those sleepy sentinels, who had probably been awakened by our coming, would permit us to enter the building, and when we did pass inside, entering a room which had been the kitchen of the farm-house wherein stood a table on which were remnants of a meal and with military accoutrements strewn everywhere, I looked in vain for the commander.

We stood there in silence mayhap two minutes, I gazing in wonderment at each of the strangers, who I now saw wore the American uniform, and they remaining motionless as if by no means surprised because we were thus left to ourselves.

Then the door of the inner room opened, and there came into this kitchen, little more than half clad and looking very sleepy, a young man, who to me was hardly more than a boy. He was well dressed, unusually so, as it seemed to me, and I was familiar with the richness of the lobster-backs' costumes, while there was on his face an expression of annoyance because of having been aroused from his slumbers.

I liked the looks of this young fellow. It was pleasant to see his face, even though there were traces of vexation upon it. But my heart sank within me when I realized that this was the French officer on whom we had laid so many plans, believing him to be a great soldier, and verily he was no

more, as you might say, than Jeremy Hapgood or myself.

So young was he in appearance, that I could not believe he had had overly much experience in the art of warfare, and, like the simple I was, said it to myself that if this was the General Lafayette from whom our people expected so much, then might they expect in vain, or as well look to Jeremy or me for something brilliant in the way of military manœuvres.

I had ample time in which to chew the matter over and thus foolishly discuss with myself the appearance of this young soldier, for straightway he entered the room the two horsemen who had come with me went close to him, and the three talked in whispers while one might have counted sixty, I standing by like a goose who rests her body first on one leg and then on the other without knowing exactly what to do.

Then it was that the young officer said to me, speaking in English, but pronouncing his words in such fashion that one could readily understand he was not familiar with the language:

"It is true, young man, what you heard regarding General Howe's intentions while you were playing the part of a servant?"

He said this as if asking a question, therefore I fancied for the instant that he counted on trying to make me prove the truth of the information I had brought; but managed to pull myself together sufficiently to answer him in proper fashion, and then it was that he began questioning.

If the two horsemen had shown themselves inquisitive a short time before, verily was he outstripping them now, for there was no detail con-

cerning the carnival, the movements of our own people in Philadelphia, or the bearing of the lobster-backs, that he did not question me upon; and it seemed as if I stood there a full hour, answering what was of no consequence, so I argued.

Having gratified his curiosity, or learned that which was necessary for him to know, he took my hand in his in the most friendly fashion, and while I cannot well repeat the words he spoke, because of his queer manner of speaking, thereby causing them to sound differently from the spirit in which I understood he intended, he caused my cheeks to flush red because of the words of praise, and wound up by promising that if it should be at some future time in his power to reward me for the service I had done, then would he take advantage of it.

As a matter of course I understood that I was dismissed when he ceased speaking, and walked out of the building, hardly knowing what to do until the man who was standing sentinel directly in front of the door, and who must have understood I had come with news of importance, suggested that I go near where the officers' horses were being fed, because there could be had provender for the beast that had carried me so gallantly.

This I did, as can well be supposed, and I was rubbing the horse's legs with whisps of grass to refresh him, for I counted on holding possession of the animal so long as I might, when I was interrupted by no less a person than the Weaver of Germantown himself, who said with a smile as he came up to me:

"Ah, now I understand how it chanced that you were so much in advance of me. I also rode after having walked as far as Germantown, but had not

the good fortune to get so good a beast as that. Where did you find him?"

"At Master Wharton's country house, where his owner had left him while he went in to tell the ladies, most like, that they need have no fear the miserable rebels would do them harm. It appears to me, Master Weaver, that you came reasonably fast, for I rode at racing speed and have not been here an hour."

"You came by a longer course, Richard Salter, and it is well you did, for those two gentlemen whom you turned back on the road, were friends of mine whom I most desire to have with this portion of the army if so be the Britishers make an attack."

"Then you have seen them already?" I asked in surprise, and the Weaver of Germantown told me he had just left General Lafayette's headquarters, where he had learned from the Frenchman himself what service I had done.

"And the Britishers?" I asked. "Do you know if they came out of Philadelphia according to the information I gained at the carnival?"

"Ay, lad, and are well-nigh ready to begin operations. One of our people came in a few moments ago with the word that a considerable force was at Chestnut Hill, and I myself know that Grant's troops are halted at the forks of the road leading to Barren Hill and Matson's Ford. There is every reason to believe that General Gray, with at least two thousand men, is at the ford within three miles of here this very moment. We are much the same as surrounded."

"And General Lafayette must, of course, surrender, unless he can turn tail and get back to Valley

Forge," I said, thus showing how little I knew of the mettle of our people who had passed the winter amid so much of suffering.

"I'll venture to say he won't surrender, lad," the Weaver of Germantown replied grimly, "although I must confess that he is in what you might well call a tight box. His only way of escape is by Matson's Ford, and the approach to that is held by at least five thousand Britishers under General Grant."

"And what will happen?" I asked as a feeling of timorousness came over me, causing, I am afraid, my face to grow pale.

"It is for General Lafayette to answer that question, and you will get reply before nightfall if you watch the movements of the men," the Weaver of Germantown said in what I fancied was a tone of sadness, whereupon I was such a simple as to exclaim:

"If it remains with that lad to get these men out of the trap into which they seem to have walked with open eyes, then am I afraid their chances are few, for he knows no more of warfare than does Jeremy Hapgood."

"Unless I am much mistaken, Richard Salter, within the next four and twenty hours you will have every reason to change your opinion regarding the French officer. The Britishers are certain to find in him a real soldier, according to all I have heard, and it will surprise me much if this day's doings are not greatly to his credit."

Just at that moment one of the soldiers came up to the Weaver of Germantown, and whispered a few words in his ear, whereupon both went hurriedly away, leaving me to wonder who this man might

be who thus kept secret his name, as you might say; and I speculated not a little as to what position he occupied with our American army.

It appeared to me as if he was anxious to conceal his identity under this fanciful name of the Weaver of Germantown, and I believed I already had good proof that he was of more importance, or of higher rank, if you please, than that of a spy, for since we arrived at the encampment I noted that all those who came in contact with him showed no little respect in their bearing.

However, I was not left long alone to speculate upon any matter, for within five minutes after the man who called himself a spy had left, I was not only delighted, but decidedly surprised, to see Jeremy Hapgood engaged in what seemed much like an altercation with one of the sentries.

Straightway I understood what had happened. The lad had succeeded in gaining Barren Hill in an exceedingly short time, if so be he came on foot, and now was he doing that which I would have been forced to do but for having met the two officers on the road — trying to show that he had fair right to enter the encampment.

I hurried forward to where the sentry stood barring the way, and fortunately for Jeremy Hapgood, the soldier had not only seen me when I entered in company with the two horsemen, but had afterwards seemingly taken especial note of the fact that I appeared to be on intimate terms with the Weaver of Germantown.

Therefore it was that the man listened favourably to me when I explained that Jeremy was one of the party who had been sent out from Philadelphia to give warning of what the lobster-backs were

about, and although it might not have been according to military usage or law, the sentinel allowed my comrade to pass him without referring the matter to a superior officer.

It goes without saying that Jeremy was decidedly surprised at finding me at Barren Hill, having the appearance of one who had been long there, and before he would answer a single question which I was striving to put, the lad insisted on knowing how it was I had succeeded in making my way so rapidly.

In order to make certain of hearing his story within a reasonable length of time, it became necessary for me to go into details regarding all that I had done since we parted, and Jeremy was as delighted as a baby with a new toy, when I explained how it had been possible for me to get possession of a horse.

Not until I had come to the very end of my story, omitting none of the details, did the lad tell me what had happened to him since we last saw each other. Although he had not met with much of adventure, verily had he exerted himself twenty times more than I, for throughout the entire night he had traveled, walking at times in order to regain his breath, but running the greater portion of the distance; hiding in the thicket whenever he heard anyone advancing toward him, and taking such chances as I had not been called upon to take because of being mounted.

Verily Jeremy Hapgood had done more for the Cause than I on this night, and I was ashamed when he had come to the end of his simple story, because I made so many words of that which, as compared with what he had done, amounted really to nothing.

While we stood there within a stone's throw of General Lafayette's quarters, talking about what we had done since leaving Philadelphia, there was no little stir in the encampment. It was not necessary we lads should understand overly much of military matters in order to know that some important movement was near at hand, and, considering the news we had brought, it was not difficult for us to understand that General Lafayette was making preparation to meet the enemy; but whether to give them battle, or retreat, we could not determine.

Shortly after the men had had rations served out to them, we lads not sharing in the distribution of the food owing to the fact that we were not members of the army, the Weaver of Germantown came to where Jeremy and I were sitting on the ground, and said in a low tone:

"This portion of the army will begin to move very speedily. It is for you lads to join it, unless peradventure you are willing to take the chances of being captured by the lobster-backs. You have General Lafayette's permission to ride with his staff, and I advise you to make ready for the start without delay. The movement about to be executed will be rapid, and he who lingers ever so little stands a good chance of being left behind."

All this was somewhat of a puzzle to me, and I would have called after the man, urging that he explain his meaning; but Jeremy Hapgood clutched me by the coat sleeve as he said in a low tone:

"Verily, Richard, this is no time for overly many words, and I am of the belief that the Weaver of Germantown would not explain to you the meaning of all he has said, no matter how you might implore him. If we are to follow the general's

staff, let us make ready to do so, and not bother our heads further."

"But it is not for us to leave this place until our comrades have arrived," I exclaimed petulantly.

It came to my mind that after what I had just done for the Cause, I was entitled to more consideration than would have been shown an ordinary lad, and, such a simple was I, that it seemed as if some special provision should have been made for the safety of my comrades and myself.

"Here come Tim Bowers and Sam Elder," Jeremy suddenly cried, and, looking up, I saw the two lads both astride a woebegone looking horse, riding toward the encampment at full speed.

Understanding that they might have trouble passing the sentinel, I went forward, beckoning Jeremy to follow me.

Singularly enough, no one paid any attention to them, which fact was owing, I suppose, to the general excitement on every hand, and the forming of the men into columns for marching.

"How does it chance that you and Timothy are together?" Jeremy cried, while our lads were yet some distance away striving to force the old horse into a faster gait.

"We met just in advance of General Grant's column," Sam replied laughingly as if it were a great joke. "He was coming on one road and I the other, when the troops appeared so close at our heels that we made a sudden break into the thicket, running into each other's arms, causing both of us, for the moment, no little alarm."

"Did you see or hear anything of young Chris?" I asked as the lads dismounted and turned their weary steed free.

"It seems reasonably certain he has been taken prisoner," Sam Elder replied gravely. "You may fancy how near we were to the advance of the lobster-backs, when while skulking in the thicket we could hear the men talking with each other, and there was dropped now and then a word concerning a boy who had been taken while evidently trying to carry information to the Americans. Therefore Tim and I have decided young Chris has been captured."

"We also heard somewhat concerning a Tory lad who had had a hand in the matter," Timothy Bowers added, "and while Sam won't agree with me, I am of the opinion that Skinny Baker played a part in young Chris's downfall."

"But how could Skinny Baker have known anything concerning young Chris's movements?" I cried, not inclined to put any faith in what Tim had suggested. "That Tory cur, in order to have had any idea of Chris's whereabouts, must have known that all of us were at the carnival — meaning those who were not then in the work-house," I added laughingly. "If the miserable coward had had any such information, you may set it down as a fact that we would never have been allowed to leave Master Wharton's house."

"But suppose Skinny knew we were there as servants, and suppose he counted on bringing about our arrest? The pretended attack by the Americans knocked the miserable cur's plans awry, and how about it then?" Tim asked as if he had settled the matter definitely.

I realized at once that all this guessing might be exceedingly near the truth, understanding that Skinny Baker would make as great display of his

power, if so be there was chance for him to have us taken as spies, as the lobster-backs would permit.

It was well within reason that he might have counted to wait until a late hour, or, possibly, he had not gotten at the ear of any British officers in time to make the arrest before the alarm was given that our people were attacking the outposts.

From that moment he might have been in pursuit of us, and we, by going to the work-house, had thrown him off the track.

It was not impossible, or improbable, that, having lost track of us during the excitement of the supposed attack, he roamed around until coming accidentally upon young Chris, and had been able to find enough of lobster-backs near at hand who would aid him in making the capture.

At all events, we knew full well that a coward like Skinny Baker would not have tackled young Chris alone, and were firmly convinced that our comrade had been made prisoner.

But there the matter must rest for the time being, since we were powerless even to learn where he might be confined, and although we had known all the particulars, how were we to do anything whatsoever at a time when the lobster-backs had, as it seemed, so nearly surrounded Barren Hill that all the army under General Lafayette's command must be taken prisoners?

We had little opportunity for further conversation. It was just at the moment when we had decided young Chris was in the power of Skinny Baker's friends, that the Weaver of Germantown came up hurriedly, and said in a tone very much like that of command:

"Get you ready, lads. If so be you can follow

the general's staff on foot, then am I believing all will go well so far as you are concerned."

He had no sooner said this than he seemingly noted for the first time that Tim and Sam had come in; but beyond greeting them in friendly fashion, he paid no further attention to the lads.

"There is no time for you boys to loiter here; see to it that you follow the general's staff," he repeated once more, and then walked away, leaving me undecided as to what I should do.

With the horse which I had taken from Master Wharton's grounds I could readily keep pace with the officers who made up the general's staff; but surely four of us might not ride upon one beast, and I hesitated, for the moment almost inclined to say I would take advantage of the opportunity, leaving them to follow as best they might.

Then it came upon me that such a course would be cowardly, if nothing more, and with a sigh I decided to leave the horse where he was tethered, allowing whosoever might first chance upon the beast to take him as a prize.

"We will all walk," I said, as if there had never been the slightest doubt in my mind regarding the matter. "It is true I have a horse, and you lads also an imitation of one; but verily you had better be on foot than trust yourselves to the back of that bunch of bones; therefore we will take even chances."

Then I led the way toward where I saw the group of officers, mounted.

CHAPTER XII

THE RETREAT

As to what happened during the time General Lafayette was striving to withdraw from the dangerous position he found himself in after the advance of the Britishers, I cannot of my own knowledge speak clearly.

To me, and my comrades are of the same mind, the day was apparently spent in moving here and there blindly, so to speak. It appeared now and then, from what little I could see in advance of us, that we were on the very verge of being captured, and again did it appear as if we had gotten off scot free, while mayhap half an hour later the danger was seemingly greater than before.

If I attempted to set down the details of the movement which gave good proof of the young French officer's ability to handle men, I should surely make a bungling job of it.

Therefore it is I count to copy out what I afterwards read concerning that escape of ours. There is no good reason why I should do other than use the words of the man who knew full well what he was writing about; for we lads had no part or parcel in that retreat, save as we followed closely at the heels of the officers' horses, running now and then in order to keep pace, and again allowed to remain idle five or ten minutes at a time, all the while so confused as to the general purpose of the com-

mander as not to be able clearly to understand anything save when we crossed the ford, where, during a few moments, did it seem to me as if we were safe.

We conversed very little during that marching and countermarching, for we were puzzled, and again it was not seemly we should speculate as to what was being done, because at times we were so near General Lafayette himself that he could have heard our words.

Here is what I have seen set down in printed words regarding the matter, and after reading it I can the better understand why we went here or there.

"Lafayette proved himself adequate to the occasion. In a moment, as it were, his dangers were revealed, and the one possible means of extrication resorted to. Dispositions were made as though to receive Gray; his artillery, by a well directed fire, encouraged the idea that he proposed to engage.

"His real aim was, of course, flight, and by the ford; but to attain it he must pass within a short distance of Grant, who was nearer to it than himself.

"He feigned movements as though for an attack, and by an occasional display of the heads of columns, he for a time persuaded the Englishman that an action was imminent.

"Meantime the troops, as fast as they could come up, were hurrying across the ford, until at last the artillery and a body of Oneida savages only remained on this side the stream. These were also now brought over, and on the high ground beyond our men were secure.

"Grant at last came up and ordered the advance

to move on; but it was too late. They saw but a party of our troops dotting the surface of the water like the floats of a seine. The prey had escaped.

"Grant was hopelessly in the rear, and when Gray's column closed in there was nothing between the British lines. The only skirmishing even that seems to have occurred was between a body of light horse and the Oneidas. Neither had ever encountered a like foe, and when the cavalry unexpectedly rode among the savages, the whooping and scampering of the one, and the flashing swords and prancing steeds of the other party, excited such a common terror that both fled with the utmost precipitation.

"Irritated and empty handed Howe marched back to town, with no one but his own officers to blame for his ill success."

Now it is that he who reads what I have just set down will understand quite as much as did I, who took part in the manœuvre, how General Lafayette succeeded in throwing dust in the eyes of the Britishers, and brought off his men without loss of blood when it had seemed as if he was in a trap from which it would be impossible to escape.

I would it might be possible for me to set down all that we saw and heard in the camp at Valley Forge after the French officer had led his men back in what might well be called a masterly retreat; but I have not the space nor the time if I am to tell the story of what we so-called Minute Boys of Philadelphia did.

It is not necessary for me to make any attempt at explaining how saddened our soldiers at Valley Forge were when General Lafayette and his men returned in what you may well call full flight. They had, hoping even against hope, brought themselves

to believe that something of moment was to be done by this advance on Barren Hill, and when it was shown to have come to naught, one can readily understand how great was the disappointment.

We heard on every hand words which told how much of confidence the men had placed on the movement; but none were grumbling. The advance had been of no avail; yet they were not discouraged.

Already were our people looking forward to the time when a second attempt would be made to worry the Britishers, and predicting that then the result would be far different.

It was near to nightfall when we were come to Valley Forge, and the Weaver of Germantown took special care to point out to us a small hut nearby headquarters, which we were to be allowed to occupy, and went to the extent of getting for us an order on the commissary for such food as could be procured by these half-starved men.

Now although I loved the Cause as well as any other man or lad in the colonies, my first thought when we were safe from the lobster-backs was concerning young Chris, rather than that which might have been called a disaster to our arms.

I feared he had allowed his tongue to bring him into trouble, else did it seem to me he should have been able to leave Philadelphia secretly, even as we had done; but whether the fault was his or no, we had no right to consider it at that moment.

Unquestionably he had been made a prisoner, for surely the lobster-backs could not have been talking about any other lad, because I knew of none who would have put themselves in the way of thus coming to grief.

He was our comrade, a member of our company of Minute Boys, and it was my duty, I having allowed them to call me the captain, to set all my wits at work to release him.

We had succeeded, even when all the chances appeared against us, in effecting the escape of Jeremy and Sam, and I secretly grieved over the fact that I had cut no better figure in that venture.

It was the Weaver of Germantown who had done all the work, and we lads were of little or no assistance to him, therefore as yet, so it seemed to me, the Minute Boys of Philadelphia had not shown themselves to any great advantage.

It is true we had succeeded in gaining valuable information, and had brought the same within the lines; but I burned to do more — to accomplish something which should make my name known to those who were staking their lives in battle, or against starvation.

It was necessary, so it seemed to me, that our first work, regardless of what might be needed in aid of the Cause, was to learn what had become of young Chris.

After all that had just happened I felt confident the lobster-backs would keep a sharper watch over us rebels than ever before, and if peradventure Chris had been thrown into prison, then did I despair, even though we had the aid of the Weaver of Germantown, in doing anything whatsoever toward effecting his release.

However, we would learn all that might be learned, even though we risked our lives again and again in the effort, and this much I said to my comrades when we were eating our scanty meal alone in

the hut, whereupon Jeremy Hapgood, seemingly of the same opinion as I had advanced, asked quietly, as if ready to set off at a moment's notice:

"How will you go about gaining this information which is necessary before we can raise a hand in young Chris's behalf? I must confess, Richard Salter, that I question whether it will be possible for anyone to aid the poor lad just now, unless, peradventure, the British march out of Philadelphia, as it is rumoured General Clinton intends to do, although I misdoubt it greatly."

"The only way, so far as I can see, is to go back from whence we came."

"Into Philadelphia?" Timothy Bowers cried as if in alarm, and I replied, striving to speak in a careless tone as if familiar with such desperate ventures:

"Ay, lad, that is what must be done. At the Jolly Tar inn we may find a hiding place —"

"Yes, a hiding place!" Sam cried bitterly, "and where we must keep under cover if we would save our necks. Of what avail is it to be in that rear room of the Jolly Tar inn, eating our hearts out with impatience, as far as aiding young Chris is concerned?"

"That is what I cannot say, lad; but certain it is while we remain here there is no possibility of our doing anything whatsoever, and if we are in the city there is a chance, however slight, that we may see some way out of what is now a blind hobble."

Although we Minute Boys of Philadelphia were not great in numbers, verily were we ready to do whatsoever came to our hand, and the proof of this is that when I had thus spoken, never a question

was raised against the proposition. All appeared not only ready but willing to join me in going back to that nest of lobster-backs, where by this time we knew were many on the lookout to take us prisoners.

It was when the matter had thus been settled among us that the Weaver of Germantown came into the hut, and I fancy he understood by the expression on our faces that we had been discussing some matter which was far from pleasing, for he asked in a cheery tone, throwing himself upon the floor beside me, for the hut boasted of neither chairs nor bed:

"What have you lads in mind now?"

"To go back to Philadelphia as soon as may be," I replied shortly, thinking he would attempt to persuade us that the venture was far too dangerous.

"That is exactly what you should do, lads, and what I am counting on doing myself within the next eight and forty hours, for now if ever is the time when we must keep in touch with what the Britishers are doing. If you set off at once, then may I delay so long as will be necessary to have a look about Chestnut Hill."

Then he would have laid out our work for us, telling what we should do here or there, when I interrupted him by saying:

"It appears to me that our first duty is toward young Chris. It is certain, from what Sam and Tim heard, that Skinny Baker has succeeded in bringing the lobster-backs down upon him, and we must make the attempt, even though we fail, to lend him a hand."

"Ay, lad, all that is as it should be; but remember this: Your first duty is to the Cause, and it is while you are working in behalf of the colonies that

you will best be able to discover some way in which you can help Master Ludwig, if so be he is yet on this earth."

"Do you fancy they might have killed him?" I cried in alarm, for until the man spoke there had been no such fear in my mind.

"It is possible," the Weaver of Germantown said slowly and in a subdued tone. "The Britishers are not feeling overly happy just now, as we can well understand. The pretended attack on their outposts showed them that not only the rank and file, but the officers as well, are afraid of what this rag-tag and bobtail of an army may do. Then the failure to overwhelm the troops under General Lafayette, after Howe had boastingly declared that he would bring back the general to Philadelphia a prisoner, and even gone so far as to invite certain cronies of his to a supper where he might exhibit the captive. All this, I say, is well calculated to make the lobster-backs ill tempered, and if so be they succeed in laying hands upon a spy, and your Skinny Baker can prove to the satisfaction of any prejudiced person that young Chris has been working in the interests of the colonies, then there is the chance that he may have suffered the death."

We lads were literally stupefied at the idea of such a possibility. We had believed young Chris might be held close prisoner; but more than that never entered our minds, and now, after hearing the Weaver of Germantown speak in such a solemn tone, while knowing that the arguments he advanced were sound ones, it seemed to us almost as if we had learned that Chris was indeed gone from among us forever.

The man could readily see how he had disheart-

ened us by his words, and evidently believed it necessary to revive our courage if he would have us set off speedily for the city, therefore he said in what he doubtless counted should be a cheery tone:

"Do not look so downhearted, lads. I was but putting before you the worst side of the case. It is by no means certain your Skinny Baker could succeed in proving even to the Britishers that a boy like young Chris was a spy. Then again, with all the excitement which has been in the city during the past four and twenty hours, it might be a difficult matter even for Skinny's father to have speech with any of the Britishers in command. Again, you are by no means certain young Chris is really in the hands of the British. Cease to think of him other than as one whom you count on finding without delay, and by such means you will not only succeed better in your work for the Cause, but be in shape to take a greater advantage of any opportunity which may come for helping him. When do you set off?"

I had not gone so far in my plans as to name the hour when we would leave Valley Forge. In fact, had counted on staying where we were at least another four and twenty hours, for the march from Barren Hill had been exceeding tiresome, and we were so weary that a rest seemed absolutely necessary. But when the man asked the question I replied quickly, as if it was a matter already settled:

"We go to-night."

The other lads looked up in surprise, as if believing I had lost my wits to set off when all of us were leg weary; but no one made any comment save the Weaver of Germantown, who said in a tone of satisfaction:

"That is well. The sooner you can shelter yourselves in the Jolly Tar inn the better, and even though the lobster-backs are likely to be on the alert for us rebels, I believe you may gain entrance to the city more readily now than later. Just at this time it stands to reason that they are considerably upset regarding the failure of their plans, and surely whoever might be watching out for you — say for instance, Skinny Baker — will hardly be foolish enough to think you would come directly back after having made good your escape."

I had committed myself to setting off at once, and lest the man should think I had been talking at random, I immediately rose to my feet, saying as I did so:

"I fancy we shall be the better able to make the journey if we set off before our limbs have stiffened, as they surely will if we remain here idle two or three hours more."

Well, to make a short story out of what might well be a long one, we left Valley Forge within ten minutes, the Weaver of Germantown walking with us past all the sentries to be certain we had no difficulty in leaving the encampment, and then, when he would have turned back, I counted to hear from him some kindly word of encouragement because we were venturing our necks once more.

Instead of anything of the kind, he simply shook us by the hand as if we were going on an ordinary journey, and then turned to retrace his steps.

Eager though we were to prove ourselves worthy to be called Minute Boys, and burning to be of service to the Cause, there was never one of us who could put any enthusiasm in this march which might end in our death.

We, as I have already said, were weary almost to the verge of exhaustion, and the miles which lay before us seemed so nearly interminable that I felt almost as if we could not cover half of them without failing utterly.

No one was in the mood for conversation, and we plodded on in the darkness, keenly on the alert, however, for any sounds which should betoken the coming of an enemy; but hardly conscious whether we had traversed one yard or one mile.

I believe it was the possibility young Chris might have been executed as a spy that had taken the courage from us to such an extent; but this I do know to a certainty, that when the day was dawning we were not yet beyond Germantown, and Jeremy Hapgood said to me in the tone of one who will not brook opposition:

"I can go no farther, Richard Salter. Here nearby is a house where I believe we may remain in hiding during the day, and although I am so hungry that I could eat anything in the shape of food, yet must I lie by until another night has come, for my weariness is greater than the desire for something to eat."

"Where may we remain hidden?" Sam asked, and I understood that he was decidedly of Jeremy's opinion.

Then it was the lad told us of a house which had been partially destroyed by the Britishers when they marched into our city of Philadelphia, claiming that he had visited it more than once while the lobster-backs much the same as held us prisoners within our homes.

Without further parley we followed him, coming to what had originally been a small cottage, but was

now hardly more than a ruin, yet here did it really seem as if we might find safe concealment, for it was possible, as Jeremy showed us, to gain admission to the cellar, and surely it must have been a suspicious lobster-back who would have looked beneath the charred timbers for a company of lads.

Although while talking with the Weaver of Germantown I had been strong in my determination to do whatsoever I might toward aiding young Chris, yet was I rejoiced at thus coming to a place where I could stretch my weary body out at full length, even though it was only on the bare ground, and without making any search of the place, for it was yet too dark to see clearly our surroundings, I threw myself upon the floor of the cellar and was lost in slumber almost as soon as I closed my eyes.

When next I was conscious of existence, the faint light which came in from beneath the charred timbers that overhung the cellar walls told me it was yet day, and I raised myself on my elbow to look around.

My comrades, lying even as they had thrown themselves upon the floor in exhaustion, were yet sleeping soundly, and dimly I wondered why I should have been the first to awaken, when the sound of footsteps just outside the building caused my heart to come into my throat, as the old saying goes.

I knew there were none of our people left roundabout Germantown, therefore whosoever was approaching our hiding place must be a Britisher or a Tory. In my fear, for verily I was timorous, I fancied we might have been tracked to this place, and now were come the lobster-backs to take us in custody.

Pressing my hand over Jeremy's mouth lest he should make some outcry on being suddenly awakened, I shook him into consciousness, and at the same time motioned with my hand toward the outside, that he might understand there were possible enemies near at hand.

Then we two sat bolt upright, listening intently, as you can well fancy; learning before many seconds had passed that there were no less than four or five persons who had come somewhere near what had been a window in the cellar wall of the ruins, and were now taking a rest while discussing certain matters which concerned themselves.

So near were they to where we sat listening with all our heart in our ears, that we could hear distinctly every spoken word, and before we had thus played the eavesdroppers a dozen seconds did we come to understand that fate, or fortune, whatsoever you may term it, had brought us into the one place of all our colony of Pennsylvania where we had most desired to be.

The first words we heard were spoken in a voice thoroughly familiar to us, and we looked at each other in amazement, for it was Skinny Baker himself who was saying in a whining tone that caused all the anger within me to spring up, reddening my face until I knew it must have been nearly the color of blood:

"I tell you I heard all those fellows said concerning what they would do against the king," the Tory cur was saying as if in answer to some reproof or question. "This lad here has been one of the foremost in starting what they call the Minute Boys of Philadelphia, and if you know aught regarding the people of our town, then do you know that Lud-

wig, the baker, is as rank a rebel as may be found within the colonies."

Jeremy and I gazed at each other in astonishment. That which we had heard told us our comrade was within mayhap a dozen paces of where we sat, and I literally struggled to understand how it could have happened he was not already lodged in prison.

Before any of Skinny's companions made reply there came to my mind like a flash of light an explanation of this matter, and it was much like this: I believed young Chris had been taken prisoner within a short distance, mayhap, of Barren Hill, and put under guard to be carried to Philadelphia. Skinny, who, there could be no question, was responsible for Chris's arrest, had remained with these lobster-backs in order to gloat over the lad whom he had brought to grief; but why they had not come down in advance of the army I failed of understanding.

However, they must have loitered behind for some reason or another, or might have come as far as this place with the main body of troops and stopped here to rest, for those who wore the king's uniform were not overly eager to do more of labour than was absolutely necessary.

I have said all this came into my mind like a flash, and it was within one single instant that I settled the matter, at least, to my partial satisfaction, and then understood why Skinny was striving to convince these men of young Chris's guilt, for one of them said angrily, with that accent which bespoke the cockney Britisher:

"If it so happen good King George can be hurt by such an infant as this, then is it time we who

have come to whip these rebels into subjection, turn about and go home. I enlisted to fight men, not children."

"You watch this fellow a little while, and you'll come to understand that there is no child about him," Skinny replied vindictively. "Haven't I already told you what he has done?"

"Yes, you have, lad, and yet I am not bound to believe it all. If a chap like you allows himself to be towed around a city filled with king's troops without making any attempt at escaping, then is he likely to draw the long bow when he explains how it happened."

It was only natural Skinny should be excited and angry at thus being much the same as told that he was a coward, and straightway he began explaining how we lads fell upon him in overwhelming numbers, and how impossible it was for him to make any outcry while we were marching him through the streets.

This explanation occupied so much time that I set about awakening Tim and Sam, even as I had aroused Jeremy, and the expression on their faces when they heard Skinny Baker talking would have been to me comical in the extreme, but for our situation.

A fellow cannot well laugh when he knows that within the next minute, perhaps, he may find himself a prisoner, and therefore it was their looks of surprise and dismay were passed by unheeded.

When Skinny had told his story with great detail, and a vast amount of untruth, one of the men asked as if it was a matter of little importance to him:

"And now having pointed out this boy as a rebel,

what do you count will become of him? Is it in your mind he shall be dealt with as a spy?"

"Ay, that it is!" Skinny cried in a fury, and I could well fancy the expression of hatred on the miserable cur's face as he spoke. "How else can he be dealt with after I have told the story of what he did?"

"That is as those who hear you may be inclined to say whether you are telling the truth in the interest of his majesty, or striving to pay off a private grudge."

I could have hugged the man who made that suggestion, and really believe I laughed inwardly when Skinny, now so angry that he could not speak plainly, snarled:

"They will believe me when I show what he has done. It is well-known he was among those who held me prisoner, and I can bring lads who will swear he did his best to make them agree to become Minute Boys. If such work as that doesn't bring him to the gallows, then can every rebel in Philadelphia do whatsoever he may without fear of coming to grief."

It was then another voice broke in, saying with a yawn, as if wearied by the controversy:

"Why shall we spend our breath talking of what may or may not be? It simply remains with us to carry this boy into the city and lodge him in the stone prison, after which we may go about our business, and blooming glad shall I be, for this escorting children around the country for the purpose of having them hanged later, is not to my liking."

Then it was that Skinny would have repeated again the list of young Chris's crimes; but that one of the men interrupted him by saying:

"We've heard that yarn once, and there is no need of your telling it again. I am wondering why the prisoner holds his tongue."

That same thought was in my mind, for young Chris was never inclined to remain silent when there was any provocation to wag his tongue, and now, being almost the same as invited to defend himself, he said, speaking like a man:

"Much of what that Tory cur has said is true; a great deal is made up out of whole cloth. We did take him prisoner, because while being engaged in work of our own, he played the spy upon us, and we were not minded he should run to tell the news broadcast over the town, for it would look much as though we had been engaged in some unlawful transaction. When we laid hands on him, the wretch was so frightened that he did not dare defend himself even with his tongue. A lamb going to the slaughter-house couldn't have moved more peaceably or willingly. The only regret I have is that he who has brought me into this trouble was not a decent fellow, and surely you who have seen and heard him can have a fairly good idea of what a cur he is."

Jeremy clutched my hand tightly as if to show how proud he was because young Chris had spoken in such a manly fashion, and we lads looked at each other in triumph, for of a verity we had never given the lad credit for having so stiff a backbone.

From the tone of the conversation among the lobster-backs which followed, I could fancy our comrade had succeeded in gaining sympathy, if no more, by his speech, and that Skinny Baker had fallen even lower in their estimation than

before; but nothing of consequence to us was said.

We now knew that young Chris was to be taken to the stone prison, and if so be he was confined there rather than in the work-house, then we might say with good reason that there was no chance whatsoever for us to aid him. No matter how favourable the circumstances were, there wasn't a possibility we, even though with a dozen men like the Weaver of Germantown to help us, could do aught toward effecting his release.

However, we had at least learned his destination, which would prevent us from wasting our time in trying to discover where he might be, and this was no little gain.

More than that, we had gotten some satisfaction from having thus overheard the conversation between Skinny and the lobster-backs, since it served to show us of what mettle young Chris was made, and if so be it was permitted he should come from out his troubles, I said to myself that never again would I doubt his courage, nor never once raise my voice in reproach when, to my mind, he was speaking rashly or foolishly.

CHAPTER XIII

TURNING THE TABLES

AND now have I come to that part of my story which sounds like a fable even to myself, although I had in it an active part.

You can well fancy that we lads hidden in the cellar of that ruined house, kept our ears wide open for any word or sound which might come from the lobster-backs, and during mayhap five minutes after the conversation ended, as I have already set down, we heard a movement as if one or more of the men had risen to their feet and were lounging away, evidently striving to make the time seemingly pass more quickly.

Then a moment later came a similar noise, and we heard Skinny Baker ask in a querulous tone:

"What's up now? Where are you fellows going?"

"It may be that is none of your concern," one of the men replied sharply from a distance. "If so be we are forced to spend a certain number of hours lounging around here waiting for our people to come up, then do we propose to act our pleasure in the matter."

"But I am not to be left alone with the prisoner!" Skinny cried as if in alarm, and one of the men replied with a laugh:

"Are you so brave a lad as to be afraid of a fellow whose hands are tied, and who, therefore, could not do you harm even though he be so inclined, as

I fancy he is? Surely you have enough of courage to stand guard over a helpless prisoner who is hardly as large as yourself."

"It isn't that I am afraid of him," Skinny said in that whining tone of his which always aggravated me; "but how do I know if some of the rebels may not come this way while you are gone?"

"It would be a reasonably active rebel who could get 'twixt us and our force on either side. You are penned in here by his majesty's troops, my young coward, and no harm can come to you, although I am free to confess it would not break my heart if you did see a little grief just now, for I like not the road on which you are traveling."

Then all was silent, and Jeremy Hapgood gripped me by the hand until it seemed almost as if his fingers would break through the flesh, while he looked meaningly toward the opening that had formerly been the window of the cellar, whereupon I understood full well that which was in the lad's mind.

The lobster-backs had left Skinny alone with young Chris, and now was come the moment, at a time we least expected it, when there was a possibility of aiding our comrade.

The only thing which might prevent us would be that the Britishers had not gone out of sight, and as to that I determined to learn without loss of time; for if peradventure we were to make an attempt at turning the tables, then must our movements be quick — there were but few seconds in which to figure how this plan or another might work. It would be largely a matter of chance.

And I intended on the instant to make that chance come my way if possible.

When I rose cautiously to my feet the eyes of my comrades were upon me. They understood exactly that which was in my mind as I had divined what Jeremy was thinking about, and even in the gloom I could see each fellow nerving himself for a struggle, while I crept slowly forward until it was possible, without too much risk of exposing myself, to have a fairly good view of the outside.

Much to my surprise, and greatly to my delight, not a lobster-back was in sight.

Because of being unable to see young Chris and Skinny, I counted that they were sitting, most like, with their backs against the ruins just at the right of the window, where they would be screened from view; but as to their exact position I gave little heed.

The only question in my mind was as to whether the Britishers had gone so far away that we might make a bold dash to aid our friend.

We were in the village of Germantown, and this cottage which had been considerably more than half-burned by the enemy, stood amid, mayhap, half a dozen others that were in much the same condition.

I fancied, in order to explain to myself where the lobster-backs had gone, that they were simply bent on seeing what their army had done in the way of destruction.

Now we had entered the cellar through this same window out of which I was peering, and, so far as I knew, there was no other way by which we could leave the place.

It would mean failure and probable capture if we attempted to crawl through the aperture in plain sight of Skinny Baker, for while I was not afraid

of that Tory cur when he was alone, I knew that instead of standing up to give us battle, he would run off screaming to summon the Britishers.

Our only hope of making this venture a success, was to creep up on him, but how that could be done I failed for the instant to see.

It was Jeremy Hapgood who solved the question, for while I stood there gazing out, thinking, rather than striving to see anything in particular, he clutched me by the coat-sleeve, and, turning, I saw that all my comrades had gathered close around me, whereupon I moved away from the window half a dozen paces, motioning them to follow.

When we were so far away that there was little danger Skinny might overhear what we said, I put into words that which was in my mind.

Without waiting to make reply, Jeremy began running around the walls of the cellar like a dog who is on the scent of game, and before one could have counted twenty he halted suddenly, motioning with his hand for us to come up.

When we stood by his side the matter was as clear as a pikestaff, for there before us was an aperture where the walls had crumbled away, most like under the heat, through which we might have crawled in couples.

This was at the rear of the building, so that if we came into the open we would be to the right of Skinny, and screened from his view by the ruins of the building.

You may well suppose that we did not linger after finding this opening.

Jeremy would have pressed forward to be the first out, and in so doing have been exposed to the greatest danger, for we could not say but that the

lobster-backs might be within a few paces from where we emerged. I pulled him back roughly.

As captain of the Minute Boys, it was not only my right, but my duty, to take upon myself the greater share of the danger, and when he would have quarrelled with me because of preventing him from sacrificing his liberty, perhaps, if not his life, I heeded neither the words nor the looks; but pushed out through the opening as rapidly as possible, coming to a stop when my body was half in and half out of the cellar to have a look around, for I was not minded to go too blindly into what might prove to be a trap.

There was more of surprise than of pleasure in my mind when I noted the fortunate fact that not a living being was in sight. The day had well-nigh come to a close. Already the sun was sinking behind the distant hills, and I could not believe the Britishers who were guarding Skinny, would remain absent very long, for there could be no pleasure in poking around the ruins of a half-burned village in the darkness.

Therefore it was I crept outside as rapidly as possible, and when Jeremy's head and shoulders appeared in the aperture, I urged him along by pulling at his coat collar until I brought him out sprawling like a crab, Timothy's head appearing at the very instant Jeremy's feet were in the open air.

In less time than it has taken me to tell it, we four lads were out of the cellar, standing behind the ruins for a single instant before making the rush.

Then it was that I said to my comrades:

"Timothy and I will go around to the left until we have come to that corner nearest where young

Chris is lying. The other two shall stand ready to leap out at the same moment we do, and if all of us move swiftly, then have I the idea that we may prevent Skinny Baker from making any outcry whatsoever."

Without waiting to learn what the other lads might think of this plan, I clutched Timothy by the arm, forcing him to follow me while I went at the swiftest pace possible with due heed to avoid making a noise, and when we were come to that corner of the ruins where it was possible to get a glimpse of Skinny, I saw Jeremy's head protruding from around the charred timbers at the other end.

Thus far we had seen nothing whatsoever of the lobster-backs, and even though they had been close at hand, verily do I believe we would have made an attempt at a rescue just then, so thoroughly wrought up and excited were we by the possibility of aiding our comrade.

On the instant I saw that Jeremy was ready, I leaped forward, and fortune favoured me insomuch that Skinny was sitting near the window on my side of the building, so close to where I was standing that with one bound I was upon the fellow, jamming my hand over his mouth while I strove to ward off the blows which the Tory cur was trying to deal me full in the face.

Now it may seem odd; but at that moment I had more of a friendly feeling in my heart for Skinny Baker than ever before, because, for the first time in his life, did I see him show some signs of manliness. Therefore when he struggled with me I was glad to learn he had a drop or two of blood in his body which was not cowardly.

There was little time, however, for Skinny to show any resistance. In a twinkling Jeremy was upon him, and while I held the fellow's mouth so that he could make no outcry, my comrade pulled the coat from his back, tying it around the Tory's mouth and head in such a fashion that verily I was afraid he might be stifled, therefore would have loosened the rough bandage, but Jeremy whispered hoarsely:

"Do not be too tender hearted, Richard Salter. It is in my mind that no great harm would be done if this Tory did stifle, although I haven't the heart to kill him in cold blood."

While Jeremy and I were engaged in fettering the prisoner, Tim and Sam were not idle. They had cut the bonds that bound young Chris's hands, and were hustling the lad back to the place from which we had come, gaining the shelter of the corner of the building just as Jeremy and I completed our task.

Up to this moment there had been no thought in my mind as to what we should do if peradventure we succeeded in rescuing young Chris.

Now, however, the matter came to me as one of greatest importance, and even while we were dragging Skinny back on the path our comrades had traversed, did I very nearly come to a halt in trying to decide this vital question.

The Britishers, as we knew, were in front of us, or, in other words, at Philadelphia in great force. Because of what the lobster-backs said when they lounged away leaving Skinny alone, we had reason to believe a certain portion of that force which counted on taking General Lafayette prisoner, was at the time in our rear, bound for the city, and

either course we might take was likely to lead us directly into the arms of those who served the king.

It was fortunate that Jeremy had no doubt in his mind as to exactly what should be done. He continued on, dragging Skinny behind him, while I, still clutching the Tory cur by one arm, naturally followed until we were come to the place from which we had emerged, and there found Tim and Sam, having forced Chris to go ahead, already creeping under cover.

It was no more than natural we should follow, and therefore, without any deliberation or intent on my part, was our plan for the immediate future settled upon.

We were forced to shove Skinny through like a log of wood, Jeremy going ahead to pull him by the shoulders while I pushed at the fellow's feet, and when he dropped with a thud to the floor of the cellar, I followed, asking in my mind whether we were not much the same as voluntarily entering a trap by thus hiding in a place from which it would be a simple matter for the lobster-backs to take us, if so be they knew where we were hidden.

However, as I said to myself in order to still the doubts which were rising in my mind, there was no other course just then to be pursued. Go in whatsoever direction we might from that village of Germantown, and there was every reason to believe we would come upon the enemy, after which there could be no hope of escape, therefore even though we were captured within the next ten minutes, was this our only place of refuge.

A quarter-hour had not passed from the time Jeremy called to my attention the fact that the lob-

ster-backs were leaving Skinny and his prisoner alone, when we were all in the cellar again, and after clasping young Chris heartily by the hand to show how rejoiced I was that we had thus far succeeded — although he must have known it without the telling,— I set about striving to make Skinny Baker more comfortable, or, in other words, to render it less liable for him to be stifled.

In this work Timothy aided me by tearing off one of the Tory cur's coat-sleeves and tying it around the end of a stick, thereby making a fairly good gag, which we took care to place between the fellow's jaws in such a manner that he could not work it loose.

Then, propping him up against the wall of the cellar where he would be hidden from view of any who might be curious enough to look inside, we Minute Boys gathered in one corner of the hiding place to indulge in not a little crowing because we had succeeded so well in turning the tables.

As a matter of course, we were eager to learn how young Chris had been made a prisoner, and the story was soon told.

He had not been so fortunate as the rest of us in finding a horse; but was forced to make his way from Philadelphia toward Barren Hill on foot, and that the lad travelled swiftly we knew from the fact that he arrived within four or five miles of General Lafayette's position an hour after sunrise.

Believing himself to be far in advance of the Britishers, he ceased to exercise that caution which he should have maintained, and gave little or no heed to what might be going on about him, when suddenly he came upon a full regiment of redcoats, which had halted, probably awaiting orders.

Even then he might have succeeded in persuading those who questioned him, for as a matter of course he was seized immediately, that he lived near about and had simply ventured there out of curiosity; but it so chanced that that miserable cur of a Skinny Baker was with the regiment, and on getting a glimpse of young Chris, immediately cried out that he was a lad whom General Howe had long been seeking to make prisoner.

Now why Skinny should have been with a regiment of soldiers, for he was not a favourite either with the Britishers or the Tories, and certainly not with rebels, I failed to understand, save that he must have come from curiosity alone.

I dare venture to say that all the Tories in Philadelphia understood at about the time our people gave them the famous scare, or immediately afterwards, that a move against the American army was about to be made, and, as we know, Skinny was abroad that night, therefore it would have been a simple matter for him to have tailed on behind the first moving regiment he chanced upon.

At all events, how he happened to be there was of little consequence. That he was there resulted in young Chris's being made prisoner and thus held throughout all the day, forced to march here and there while Skinny kept close at his side, jeering now and then, and again threatening as to what should be done when they got back to Philadelphia.

"If I could have smashed his face with my fist, it wouldn't have seemed quite so bad," young Chris said, interrupting himself in the story; "but my arms had been tied behind my back, as you found me, and therefore I could do no more than bite my tongue, promising myself at some later day, if so

IN A TWINKLING JEREMY WAS UPON HIM.

be I lived, that Skinny Baker would repent the moment when he delivered me over to the lobster-backs."

"I dare say you didn't bite your tongue so badly but that you could give him as good as he sent," Jeremy interrupted grimly, and young Chris replied, as if regretting having been so cautious:

"I thought it best not to make overly much talk, for there was no telling what the lobster-backs might do by way of punishment, therefore I let the Tory villain continue as he would."

Well, it seems, as I have already said, that young Chris, with Skinny guarding him by way of amusement, was marched here and there at the tail of the regiment, until about four o'clock in the afternoon, when suddenly a messenger came up to the commanding officer, whereupon a guard of four men was detailed to take the prisoner back as far as Germantown, there to await the coming of the troops.

That was young Chris's story, and, as I had feared earlier in the day, his capture was brought about through his own carelessness, for verily a lad who would press on blindly at a time when he had every reason to believe the enemy might be close about him, was much the same as wickedly foolish.

However, the mistake had been corrected in some slight degree. Young Chris was free, so far as being able to move around the cellar was concerned, and Skinny had changed places with him; but now were we all in the gravest danger, for within five or ten minutes — say half an hour at the longest, the lobster-backs would return.

Failing to find their prisoner, it was only reasonable to suppose they would make careful search,

whereupon our hiding place must be discovered. We were free as are rats in a trap; that is to say, we could crawl about at will, but were painfully confined as to the scope of our movements.

"We are bound to be taken as soon as the guard comes back," young Chris said as he brought his story to a close, and added while glancing toward the prisoner, "If I want to pay the debt I owe Skinny Baker, it's time to set about it."

"What do you count on doing?" I asked in alarm.

"Giving that Tory cur such a lesson that he won't be able to forget it in short order, and unless I begin the work now, am I likely to be interrupted before it is finished."

"But surely, young Chris, you don't count on striking a helpless prisoner?" I cried, catching him by the arm, and he answered me fiercely, thus showing that in telling the story he had not given us all the details:

"I shall be doing no differently from what he has done a dozen times this day. I am minded that he shall know full well what it means to be pummeled when a fellow can't help himself!"

As a matter of fact, I had no right to interfere between young Chris and the Tory villain. The lad had suffered through Skinner Baker during the day, and I could not wonder that he was burning to make reprisals, yet although I hated that little sneak quite as much as did he, it would have pained me severely to see him set upon while he could not raise a hand in his own defence.

Fortunately, however, I was not called upon to interfere between young Chris and the prisoner, for at that moment Jeremy, who had seemingly

been plunged in a brown study during all the time of the story-telling, whispered hoarsely to me as he laid a restraining hand on Chris's shoulder:

"Why should we sit here waiting for the lobster-backs to come and take us in custody, as they surely will, for this cellar is bound to be the first place searched when they find that the prisoner is missing."

"And what may we do?" I asked with a laugh which had in it nothing of mirth. "If so be you can point out the direction in which we stand one single chance out of a hundred of escaping the enemy, then am I ready to strive for that one possibility," I replied sharply, for it seemed to me at the moment as if Jeremy was talking veriest nonsense.

Then the lad motioned toward the charred timbers above our heads, which lay as they had fallen when the building was burned, and even then I failed to understand what he strove to convey, until he said impatiently:

"Among those burned timbers are hiding places for a dozen lads like us, and of a verity we are needing a refuge, therefore why should we sit here listening to stories which can be told at any time, when we have the opportunity to put ourselves out of the way so snugly?"

Even then I doubted as to whether we might conceal ourselves there, or, if once hidden among the timbers, the lobster-backs could not bring us out.

However, there was a chance, if so be we were able to crawl among the ruins, and straightway all us lads set about making search for some means of getting to the top of the cellar, where the tim-

bers were lodged like jackstraws just thrown on a table ready for the player.

Within five minutes I saw that Jeremy's scheme was possible of execution. That we could hide ourselves there seemed certain; but whether it might be done in such fashion that the lobster-backs could not find us, was another matter which would be settled later.

However, as to this last there was no good reason for anxiety. He who crosses a bridge before he comes to it is indeed foolish.

Our first task was to find an aperture amid the ruins into which we could thrust Skinny Baker, and you can well fancy that we lost no time in making the search.

When we had climbed up on the cellar wall where we could have a view of that mass of half-burned timbers, I saw that fifty boys might have concealed themselves from view, and whispered to Jeremy and Chris to pass me the prisoner, which they speedily did, handling him with as little care as if he had been a log of wood.

As a matter of course he could make no protest, owing to the gag which forced his jaws wide apart; but there was a look of terror in his eyes which I could see even in the darkness, and I understood that the cowardly cur believed he was come very near to his death.

After we had hidden the prisoner young Chris gave himself no concern regarding anything save keeping near Skinny Baker, and I heard him whisper in the coward's ear as he laid himself down alongside the lad:

"Here am I counting to stay, Skinny, and if so be your friends, the lobster-backs, are like to take

me prisoner, I intend to choke the life out of your worthless body before I am carried away again."

Of course Skinny could make no reply; but it was a simple matter to fancy the expression of terror which came over the scoundrel's face, for he must have known, as did I, by young Chris's tone, that he would keep his threat to the letter.

We were all hidden amid the timbers before there came from the outside any token that the Britishers had returned, and then it was my heart much the same as leaped into my mouth, when I heard one of the lobster-backs cry sharply:

"Where are the lads?"

"Where you left them, of course," another voice replied from a distance, and the first speaker said in a tone very like that of alarm:

"But they are not here! It must be that some of the rebel force are near about, else how could they have got away, for certain it is that the Tory lad would hold on to the boy he was so eager to see hanged, unless separated from him by force."

Then was come the time, so I said to myself, when we would be dragged out from our hiding place, for there was no question whatsoever in my mind but that the soldiers would immediately search the cellar, since it was the only spot near-about where we might have taken refuge.

It was all very well for the lobster-backs, while they were safe in Philadelphia and in such large force that there was little danger our people could do aught of harm against them, to cry out that our army was nothing more than rag-tag and bob-tail which might be wiped out of existence when-ever they were so disposed; but the fact remained that every Britisher, and I'll not except General

Howe himself, had a wholesome dread and fear of these same rebels.

And it was this same fear to which we owed our escape, for when the first soldier suggested that some of the rebel army must be in the vicinity, his comrades were greatly alarmed, as could be told by the sound of their voices when they came together near the building to discuss the matter.

We could not hear their words; but had good reason for believing they were more disturbed in mind regarding what might happen to themselves, than because of the loss of the prisoner.

When mayhap five minutes had passed the cold chill of fear ran up and down my spine, for then I understood from the noise that one of the lobster-backs was crawling in through the cellar window, and there was no doubt in my mind but that they had decided to make a search of the ruins with the expectation of finding us.

That they would come upon us was almost absolutely certain, if any decent kind of a search was made, and I said to myself that before the sun had risen again, would I have a taste of what we rebels were called upon to suffer when in the hands of that villainous jailor, Cunningham.

Jeremy, who was lying two feet or more away from me, reached out his hand to touch me on the shoulder as if by way of sympathy, and I believe there was in his mind much the same as had come to mine.

We could hear the second soldier entering; then the third and the fourth, and I waited, holding my hand over my heart lest its loud beating should give token of our whereabouts, for them to begin

their work; but to my surprise and utter amazement, instead of making any search whatsoever of the cellar, they were seemingly content with crouching on the floor where we lads had been hidden while they were on the outside.

One, two, three minutes passed, and yet they remained motionless, conversing in whispers. Then, suddenly, it was only with the greatest difficulty I could prevent myself from laughing aloud, for now it was I understood that these brave soldiers of the uniform of the king were hiding, fearing lest that rag-tag and bobtail of an army was near enough to do them harm.

There was seemingly no longer in their minds any thought of the prisoner whom they ought to have guarded, or of the approaching force that should have been warned if indeed the Americans were nearabouts; but only the desire to save their own skins.

Now indeed were they playing much the same part that we rebels had been forced to play, and I shook Jeremy by the shoulder again and again, striving to make him understand how much of mirth there was in my heart because the lobster-backs were so completely fooled.

It did not seem possible they could remain there many moments in hiding without coming to understand somewhat of the truth, and yet never a move was made by them as the moments passed.

At first they talked in whispers, as if fearing some of that rag-tag and bobtail might be lurking close around outside, and then, when nothing came to harm their precious bodies, they were less guarded in speech, while we lay there shaking with

mirth to hear them discussing the chances of being able to rejoin their regiment.

As the time passed, however, these valiant soldiers of the king came to have some little regard for the safety of their fellows, and began speculating as to how it might be possible to give warning that the Americans were close about in the vicinity of Germantown.

One man faintly suggested that some other rather than himself, go out to meet the regiment which it was known would soon come into the village; but no fellow among them was disposed to take upon himself such a dangerous task.

Then came that suggestion which drove from my mind all thought of merriment, and sent the blood cold through every vein.

"We might set these half-burned buildings on fire, and our people, seeing the flames, would know that the rebels were somewhere nearabout, or at least be cautious in their advance."

"And what about ourselves?" one of the men asked, whereupon he who had made this suggestion which was like, if carried out, to bring to a speedy end the Minute Boys of Philadelphia, replied:

"We can doubtless find many such a hiding place as this, for ruins are plenty nearabout. At all events, the light of the flames will give the alarm, and our forces must of a certainty come up from Philadelphia to learn the meaning of the fire."

They discussed the matter from every point, but dwelling chiefly upon their own safety, until having fully decided to build a fire under the charred timbers, go out through the cellar window, and trust to fortune for keeping clear of the

American force which their imaginations had conjured up.

Then I strove as never before, to decide whether we should take the chances of a hand-to-hand struggle with four men who were armed, while we had not even a club in the way of a weapon, or remain there amid the timbers to be burned like mice in the grass.

CHAPTER XIV

A WARM PLACE

It is needless for me to say my comrades had heard the same which came to my ears, and I had good proof that at least one of them was seriously disturbed in mind, when Jeremy clutched me by the shoulder so suddenly and with such a grip that it was all I could do to prevent myself from crying outright.

Until this moment Skinny Baker had made no attempt at throwing out the gag which was fastened so securely, nor had he resisted me in any way; but now it was that he began to squirm about vigorously, as if using all his strength in an effort to free himself from the bonds, for the cowardly cur began to understand there was good chance he would be burned to death by those same lobster-backs whom he counted as his friends.

As a matter of course I understood, as did we all, that if so be the Britishers set fire to the ruins while we were among the timbers, then there was no help for us save we came out to struggle empty-handed against armed men, which would be much the same as delivering ourselves over as prisoners.

The one question was, what we should do, and that, I realized, remained for me to answer since I called myself the captain of the Minute Boys; but for the life of me I could hit upon no plan whatsoever.

To make any attempt at a battle with these lobster-backs was worse than useless; we had far better walk out humbly and deliver ourselves into their hands, than stand the chance of being mauled about cruelly without hope of gaining anything whatsoever in the fight.

There was little time for a fellow to cast about him as to the best course, even if there was any best in that situation, because straightway, without further argument, the lobster-backs began moving here and there in search of dry stuff with which to kindle a blaze, and there was no question that within the next five minutes our frail hiding place would be in flames.

Meanwhile Jeremy was gripping me yet more tightly by the shoulder, and I, irritated by this seeming insistence that I should say what ought to be done, moved ever so cautiously toward him until I could speak in his very ear, when I asked impatiently:

"What would you have me do? What chance have we, save to go out and give ourselves up?"

"That is to be done only at the last minute," the lad replied in a cautious tone, and I added angrily:

"Is it in your mind that the last moment has not yet come? It seems to me we are at the end of our tether. There yet remains the poor hope of fighting, with the certainty of being made prisoners."

"I would do nothing of the kind," Jeremy replied, and although he spoke in a whisper I fancied I detected in his tone a ring of hope. "When the fire has been kindled the lobster-backs must, perforce, leave the cellar without loss of time."

"Ay, and then shall we remain here to burn, or to follow them, as seems for the moment best," I added despondently, for I no longer had any hope whatsoever.

"We shall at least be able to remain alive during a few moments, and if so be death must come, it will not overtake us while the lobster-backs can gloat over our sufferings," the lad said, and I asked incredulously, for his words, so far as he had spoken, seemed most foolish:

"Then you would remain here in hiding until they have done their will?" I asked.

"Ay, until they have built the fire, and after that there is still a fighting chance. You must remember there is more than one opening through which we can leave this trap, and I count on taking the risk rather than giving myself up like a lamb to the slaughter," Jeremy replied boldly, and at the same time he kicked Skinny vigorously as token that the Tory cur must cease his struggles, else might the lobster-backs have token of our whereabouts before they had made ready to depart.

If it so chances that anyone reads these lines which I have set down, then I would ask him to strive in his imagination to put himself in our place just for a moment.

Directly below us were four soldiers making ready to build a fire, most likely under the very spot where we were hidden, and if Jeremy Hapgood's plan was carried out, then must we suffer from smoke as well as heat until the Britishers had left the place. The cellar, at its deepest part, was not more than five feet, and such a blaze as they were likely to kindle would reach us almost at the same moment it fastened itself upon the

timbers, therefore were we likely to get a scorching before the flames had made any headway, if peradventure we were not first stifled by the smoke.

However, I was of the mind to do as Jeremy had said. From the time this company of Minute Boys had been formed, his was ever the wisest judgment regarding what should or should not be done, and verily even though it had been young Chris who suggested it, must I have followed the plan because there was none other, save that of meekly yielding ourselves prisoners.

It seemed to me that the lobster-backs had no sooner begun hunting for dry wood than the fire was started, and, as I had feared, the first tongues of flame, which came up from a huge pile of charred lumber they had dragged together, appeared between the timbers almost directly beneath where I lay, therefore was it that my situation seemed likely to prove the most disagreeable, if not the most dangerous.

Meanwhile Skinny continued to struggle as best he might, Jeremy and Tim kicking him now and then; but without avail. The Tory cur was so frightened, as well he might be, that he gave no heed to the punishment inflicted upon him by our lads, but thought only of what seemed a fact — that he, as well as we, would be burned until we were dead.

I strove to divert my mind from the pain and from the danger, by listening intently for the movements of the soldiers, and soon came to understand that they had lost no time in crawling out through the cellar window.

Jeremy had been equally watchful, for when the

last fellow went through the aperture he began crawling toward the end of the timbers where they had lodged against the cellar wall on the north side, and at the same same time he dragged the struggling Tory with him, as if having more care to save Skinny Baker from pain than to shield himself.

I would have followed close on his heels but that young Chris had begun to move almost at the same moment, and, following him, went Tim and Sam, therefore was I left the last, as most like was right, since I counted myself to be the leader and therefore should occupy the post of greatest danger or greatest pain.

While Jeremy dragged at Skinny, the other lads pushed the fellow along, taking no special heed as to gentleness, and even while the smoke was curling above me, causing my throat to smart and my eyes to burn, I had a feeling of gratification that the Tory cur was suffering even more than were we, for in addition to the discomfort caused by the blaze, was the rough handling he received from those who were trying to force him into a place of comparative safety.

I have no very clear idea of how I came out amid the network of timbers to the bottom of the cellar, and there lay at full length with my face pressed against the floor of beaten earth, striving to free my lungs from smoke.

The lads afterward told me that I would have smothered to death, but for their pulling at me even as they had at Skinny, because, before Sam, who was next ahead of me, had gotten out, I was well-nigh suffocated and had nearly lost consciousness.

It was Jeremy who forced me to get to my feet that we might go to the other end of the cellar, where was the aperture through which we had crept when making ready for the attack upon Skinny, and once there we were able to breathe the comparatively fresh air, giving the greatest relief, I think, I ever experienced in all my life.

The cellar was not large. Already were the timbers aflame and the heat was growing exceeding painful, yet we gave little or no heed to it, owing to the pleasure of filling our lungs with that sweet night air.

I noted that the gag had been taken from Skinny's mouth, and young Chris, the last member of the party whom I would have credited with kindly feelings toward the Tory cur, explained, when he saw I noticed the fact, that he had removed it with threats to kill the lad if he made an outcry, because of wanting to save him from the pain of suffocation such as we had all experienced.

During an instant I believed such a move to be unwise in the extreme, for Skinny had but to raise his voice in order to give the lobster-backs to understand that someone remained in the cellar; but Jeremy whispered:

"Have no fear he will try to give an alarm. He knows full well what will be the result, for I have promised to kill him in cold blood if he makes the slightest noise, and, besides, he is so nearly suffocated that I question if he could do very much more than squeak."

Well, we stood there breathing in the sweet air, and feeling uncomfortably warm, while one might have counted twenty, and then I was so far

recovered from the effects of the smoke as to realize that now was come the time when we must run some risks if we would save ourselves from a most painful death.

Therefore it was I said to the lads, not fearing to speak in an ordinary tone because the crackling of the flames would drown my voice from any who might be outside:

"I count on venturing forth now. If so be you hear an outcry, then look about you for some other means of escape, even though I question if there be any, for you will know that I have been taken prisoner. If peradventure the coast be clear, you shall hear of it at once, and must follow without loss of time, for if we are to make our escape this night, it is to be done in short order, before the flames have gotten sufficient headway to light up the village."

No one made any attempt at staying me as I crept out through the aperture. All knew that this was the only course to be pursued, and perhaps he who might be taken prisoner by the Britishers would suffer even less than those who remained behind too long.

So eager was I to learn what we might expect on the outside, that I gave but little heed to caution, forcing myself out through the narrow opening as rapidly as possible, and once beyond the wall of the cellar, I stood up, regardless of whoever might see me, in order to have a better view of the surroundings.

Verily it seemed as if the same kindly fortune which had watched over us thus far, still had us lads in mind, for never a living being was in sight. The lobster-backs must have fled in the opposite

direction, and if so be we could get beyond the rays of light within a short time, then was there yet a possibility of our going free.

I could have cried aloud with joy because of this fortunate circumstance; but there was no time in which to rejoice just then, and, bending down with my face to the aperture, I said hurriedly to Jeremy, who was standing by to learn what I might have discovered:

"No one is in sight. Come as quickly as you can, for as yet the flames are not casting any light in this direction, the ruins being afire only at the further end."

There was no need for me to say more. Almost before I had ceased speaking was Skinny Baker thrust through without ceremony, and as he came out much like a log of wood, I grasped him by the throat lest he make an outcry.

"You needn't fear that I'll try to do you any harm," the cowardly cur said whimperingly when I relaxed my hold sufficiently for him to speak. "I have had enough of this fighting for the king, and am done with it from now on."

"Don't fancy for a single moment, Skinny Baker, that I or any of our party are afraid of what you may do, and as regards your fighting for the king, you never have done so thus far. Your work, whatsoever it has been, was that of a sneak's, and if you fancy I am inclined to believe you are done with meddling in this trouble 'twixt the king and the colonies, then you take me for a greater simple than I really am."

By this time the other lads were out of the cellar, and Jeremy seized Skinny by one arm while I held him by the other, forcing him to bend low

that we might thereby stand less chance of being seen.

Then we three, followed by our comrades, ran at full speed straight away from this place of refuge which had like to have been our tomb, heeding not where we went so that we might gain the cover of darkness amid the bushes beyond.

I believe we ran a full half-mile without stopping, and then were come to a bunch of willows growing by the side of a small brook, where we threw ourselves down, not only to rest and regain breath, but to decide upon some course of action, for this travelling at random was like to be dangerous work while the Britishers were nearabout, as we had good reason for believing.

However, the enemy was not so near our halting place that we could hear or see anything of him, and straightway, as soon as it was possible to speak, Jeremy said to me:

"I'm thinking, Richard, that our best course is to make an attempt at getting to Valley Forge, unless the lads are minded that we shall set this Tory free."

"That we won't do," young Chris cried quickly and stoutly. "I am determined that he shall be held a prisoner so long as pleases me, even though I take the chances of going to the gallows every hour in the day."

"But what will you do with him?" Jeremy asked, and I replied:

"We might send him to Valley Forge, and if so be the Weaver of Germantown yet remains there, I guarantee that he will hold him close prisoner during a certain time at least."

"*Send* him back," Timothy repeated. "Have you no idea of going yourself, Richard Salter?"

"No," I replied, and my plans were made on the instant. "We were ordered to go back to Philadelphia that we might be there in case of need, and I count on obeying the command, regardless of any such miserable whelp as Skinny Baker."

"I will go with you, as a matter of course," Jeremy said quietly, as if there could have been no question as to what he would do. "Why not let the other lads take charge of Skinny, and find their way either to Swede's Ford, or Valley Forge, as the case may be?"

Not only did this appear to be a good plan, but it was the only thing I could think of at the moment. Although it was impossible to guess how we might be of service to the colonies when we were once hiding in the Jolly Tar inn, I felt that we must go there because of having been sent, and owing to the fact that the Weaver of Germantown, believing us to be there, might lay out some important work for us to do.

It would be more easy for two of us to gain that hiding place while the lobster-backs were stirred up, as we had every reason to believe they must be, than for the entire party, and surely we could not hope to take Skinny with us, nor would it be safe to make the attempt. As I looked at the matter, I could say in the words of the old adage, that the game was not worth the candle.

Better that Tory scoundrel went free and unpunished, than that we should fail of being at our post of duty whenever we were needed, and just at the moment I had little care what became of

Skinny; but young Chris settled the matter without much parley, by saying:

"I am more inclined for Valley Forge than Philadelphia, just now, and count that Skinny shall have ample knowledge of what it means to be a prisoner. If so be none of the rest of you are of the same mind, I shall go on with him alone; but certain it is that whatever plans you may make, it will be necessary to count me out, unless they are formed with the idea of holding this young cur in our power."

"Timothy and Sam shall go with you," I replied promptly, as if having already decided upon such course. "Jeremy and I will strike out for Philadelphia, and if so be you come upon the Weaver of Germantown in the camp, tell him that we count on gaining the Jolly Tar inn if we live sufficiently long."

Then I would have given the lads instructions as to how they should proceed, and perhaps very much advice that might not have been of any avail, for it seemed to me that as captain of the Minute Boys it was my duty to instruct each and every one of them, even though they might know more concerning the matter under discussion than did I; but young Chris was not minded to listen.

His one fear was that the Britishers might come stealthily upon us, thus giving Skinny an opportunity to escape, and just at that time the baker's son had more care to holding the young Tory prisoner, than he had for his own safety.

Without a word of farewell, or even waiting to learn what Tim and Sam thought of the proposition, he pulled Skinny Baker roughly to his feet and started off, crossing the stream and going, as

I fancied, in the direction of the river, which would be his proper course since it must bring him directly to Swede's Ford, from which place he could get information as to the location of Valley Forge.

"I suppose it is our duty to follow him," Tim said ruefully as he rose to his feet. "You are right, Richard, about its being easier for two lads to go through the city of Philadelphia just now, than for five, therefore am I minded to do as you commanded; but it would please me much better to share with you and Jeremy all the dangers."

"There is an equal amount of danger in making the attempt to gain Valley Forge," I replied, striving hard to speak in a cheery tone. "You know full well that the Britishers are nearabout; they may be between us and Swede's Ford even now, therefore are you as likely to come upon them to your grief, as are Jeremy and I."

Tim turned quickly and followed young Chris, as indeed he had need to, for the baker's son was moving so swiftly that in a few seconds he would have been lost to view in the gloom.

Then Sam wheeled about as if unwillingly, and finally he also disappeared from our view, while Jeremy and I lay there on the ground, each striving to read the thoughts of the other concerning the attempt to gain the Jolly Tar inn, for verily, after all that had happened, it would be a most dangerous venture.

By this time our late hiding place was in flames; we could see in the distance the sky lighted up as if by a great conflagration, telling that more than one of the ruins had been fired by the lobster-backs, and there was every reason to believe that their

scheme of alarming the Britishers in Philadelphia would be successful.

At that particular time, after having been nearly frightened to death and then outwitted by a mere boy, General Howe would not be in an enviable mood, and I could well fancy that all in the city who wore the king's uniform and carried muskets, would be called out to defend his high mightiness against the rag-tag and bobtail that were suddenly becoming so active.

Were it not that I must cut this story short because of knowing that the time is near at hand when I, who am now regularly enlisted in the Continental army, will be called upon for service, I could set down many words concerning our efforts to gain the Joly Tar inn, for the way was not smooth nor readily traversed.

I hardly need say that we followed down the river, not only because it seemed to us to be out of the way of the Britishers, if so be they came up to Germantown to learn the cause of the conflagration, but also that we might come upon the city on a course that was familiar to us.

Even though we were thus beyond what would naturally be the line of march for those who were going to Germantown, did we come upon squad after squad, company after company, of lobster-backs, who were hurrying forward as if believing the Americans were ready to give them battle.

At such times Jeremy and I hid ourselves in the thicket, or plunged into the river and remained there with only our heads above the surface, oftentimes forced to halt a full hour until the enemy had passed.

When morning came we were yet a considerable

distance from our destination, and it was not needed any should tell us that we must remain in hiding during the hours of daylight.

We went back from the river near to half a mile before finding a thicket which would seem to serve our purpose, and there, without food, and suffering from the heat, for the day was exceeding warm even though so early in the spring, we remained with more or less of patience until another night had come, when we set out, forced to make many a detour before finally arriving at the tavern.

We gained the rear of the building early in the morning — perhaps two o'clock,— and it was in my mind that we would not be able to arouse Master Targe without danger of being overheard by some of his Tory neighbours; but, greatly to my surprise, no sooner had I tapped on the door ever so gently, than it was opened, and the sour-visaged landlord bade us enter quickly that he might not seem to have his inn open at such an hour.

"Were you expecting us, Master Targe?" I asked in surprise, and he replied gruffly:

"I counted on your being here last night."

"Why could you have supposed we would have come then?" Jeremy asked in amazement, and the man gave answer as if he was unwilling even to speak:

"Those of us who are striving to lend a hand to the colonies, have means of communicating with each other now and then. You lads must not hug to yourselves the idea that you are the only messengers which come 'twixt Philadelphia and Valley Forge. Now you will get into the room you know so well, in order to be prepared for to-morrow's work."

"Do you know what there may be for us to do, sir?" I asked in astonishment, yet striving to figure out how this man could have heard that we should have arrived the night previous.

"You will be told when the time for work comes," was all the reply he would make, and when we made to linger, he actually forced us along the passage and up the stairs as if afraid we might be seen by someone already in the house, or that we might see more than he intended for our eyes.

I took notice of the fact that Master Targe locked the chamber door on the outside, thus making us much the same as prisoners, and although we had good reason for knowing the innkeeper was a friend to the Cause, else the Weaver of Germantown would not have made of this house a rendezvous, yet was there an unpleasant suspicion in my mind that foul play might be intended, therefore I said as much to Jeremy when we had thrown ourselves down on the bed of straw.

"There is neither need nor sense in borrowing trouble, Richard Salter. We have been sent to this place, and I would have come even though knowing beyond a peradventure that Master Targe was a Tory who would do us all the harm in his power. We have obeyed orders as Minute Boys should, and without question, therefore, since we have been so lucky as to escape the lobster-backs all the way from Germantown here, let us be satisfied."

"I can easily be satisfied with what we ourselves have done, and at the same time feel disagreeable in mind concerning the future," was my reply; but Jeremy had no mind to continue the conversation, and within five minutes his loud breathing told that

he had fallen asleep, therefore I could do no less than follow his example.

When I was next conscious of my surroundings Master Targe had entered the room and was shaking me roughly, saying when I opened my eyes in a dazed manner, as does one who is rudely aroused:

"It is time for you to be moving, Richard Salter. There are no minutes to be lost just now, for verily has the time come when we who love the Cause must bestir ourselves."

"What would you have me do?" I asked, springing to my feet on the instant and thoroughly wide awake, for such a speech as this was well calculated to put a fellow in possession of all his faculties, and the reply which the innkeeper gave was such as caused me to start back in astonishment and fear.

"I would have you go at once to your mother's home. The lobster-backs who lodge there are now at headquarters, as I have just received information, and if so be you meet with no one on the street who knows you, then will it be possible to gain admittance unobserved by the enemy."

"But surely I will be made prisoner as soon as the officers come back," I replied, and it is not certain but my voice trembled, for it seemed to me that of all the work which we lads who called ourselves Minute Boys had done, this venturing into my own home where were lodging three of his majesty's officers, was the most perilous.

"If your mother cannot find a hiding place for her son, then we may truly say there is none on this earth for him," Master Targe replied grimly, and after an instant's hesitation I asked:

"Once there, what would you have me do?"

"It is positive that the Britishers are about to make some move, most like against our people at Valley Forge. Your mother will do all she may to overhear what is said between her lodgers; but it would not be possible, under ordinary circumstances, for her to get out of doors at a late hour in the night to tell us of that which has been learned, therefore you are to stay there and act as her messenger."

I breathed more freely, knowing that the lodgers never went around the house, save from the street-door to their own rooms, and had no question but that if it was simply a matter of remaining hidden, it could readily be done. Besides, I had for the instant forgotten the pleasure which would be mine in being with my mother once more, and now was I as eager to set off as a moment previous I had been halting.

"Be very careful, Richard Salter, even as you walk through the streets, for word has come to me since daylight that we who have tried to aid the Weaver of Germantown are in great danger. I have sent out a messenger to meet him, fearing lest he should come down from Valley Forge without giving due warning."

"Do the lobster-backs know that he has been playing the spy?" Jeremy asked in a tremulous voice, and Master Targe replied, as he let his hands fall by his side in token of helplessness:

"Ay, lad, God help him and us, they do. How the suspicion can have been set on foot I fail of understanding."

I would have lingered to ask further questions, but that Master Targe pushed me roughly toward the door as he said:

"Go out by the rear entrance; your comrade will stay here, and if so be you have word to bring me in the night, knock softly twice on the window of the tap-room. You may be certain I shall remain on guard there to await your coming."

Then it was that I hurried home, taking due care, as I was well like to do after having been warned by the innkeeper, lest I come upon the lobster-backs.

It was not a difficult matter for a lad who knew the city as well as did I, to avoid Britishers, for one could go across this garden or through that alley without much risk of being looked upon as a fugitive during the time of daylight.

Of the meeting with my mother I shall say nothing. It can readily be fancied how joyful it was, and how great was my pleasure at being with the dear woman once more.

It was a full half-hour that she held me in the kitchen, asking what I had done and how much of danger I had been in, and pressing me now and then against her breast fervently as she prayed aloud that I might be spared to her — to her, a widow, whose only son I was.

As for the hiding place, that was arranged in a simple manner. Directly over the kitchen was a loft which we used as a store-place for odds and ends, and there I made for myself a bed where it was possible to hear my mother as she moved to and fro.

For the first time since I had pledged myself to act as one of the Minute Boys of Philadelphia, did I feel that I was no longer in danger from those who served the king.

I believe I had thus remained in fancied security

no more than one hour, hugging myself mentally because of finding that my work as Minute Boy was cast in such pleasant places so suddenly, and then came those tidings which well-nigh caused my heart to stand still.

I heard the kitchen door open suddenly, and a hoarse voice ask hurriedly:

"Are you alone, Mistress Salter? Are your lodgers in the house?"

"They have not been here since morning."

"And Richard?"

"He is nearabout," my mother replied guardedly.

Then it was that I recognized Baker Ludwig's voice, as he said sufficiently loud to be heard in my hiding place:

"God help us who love the Cause, and may God help the colonies! Much that we in Philadelphia have done is known to General Howe, by what means I cannot say. Within the hour Master Targe, landlord of the Jolly Tar inn, has been arrested, and there was found in his house, hiding in one of the back rooms, Jeremy Hapgood, who, as I know, was concerned with your son and mine aiding the Weaver of Germantown in his work."

CHAPTER XV

A NARROW ESCAPE

THERE is little need for me to speak of the terror which flooded my heart as I heard this announcement of Master Ludwig's, for verily did it seem as if the end was come for us who had striven to aid the colonies.

From what Skinny Baker had told when he was released from imprisonment under the lumber pile, the Britishers knew that a certain number of us lads were banded together as Minute Boys for the purpose of doing whatsoever might come to hand that would aid the Cause; but most like up to that time they had not been aware of the part played by the innkeeper of the Jolly Tar.

Now, however, all this had been made known to them in some mysterious manner, and I had no doubt but every last one of us would be hunted down that we might be brought to answer for what had been done against the king, even though it was so slight and so poor in results.

My brain was in such a whirl, and the terror which beset me was so overwhelming, that during a certain time I was hardly aware of what took place around me, and then I realized that Master Ludwig was giving my mother yet further information regarding all this trouble that had come upon us.

Striving to put behind me the fear which caused every limb to tremble as if I was afflicted with an

ague fit, I threw myself at full length on the floor in order that I might hear the better.

I could only guess at what Master Ludwig had said during that time when I was entirely given over to fear; but that which he was saying now threw a little light on the terrible matter.

"Something happened at Germantown last night which gave the Britishers a fine fright, and perchance your son may be able to tell us what it was. At all events, several of the half-burned houses were set on fire, and when the Britishers gathered there, believing our people were about to make an attack, it was learned that a party of boys — yours and mine among them, Mistress Salter — had rescued a prisoner from a squad of lobster-backs. What was more to the purpose, they took another in exchange, disappearing almost immediately afterward. How it chanced that they were tracked to the Jolly Tar inn I cannot say; but some friend to the king must have seen them entering that tavern, and Master Targe was arrested. We will hope they have no other proof that he has served us of the colonies."

Then it was my mother told Master Ludwig where I was hidden, and straightway the baker came up into the loft, asking anxiously if I knew aught concerning young Chris.

As a matter of course, I told him how we had rescued the lad after Skinny Baker had succeeded in causing his arrest, and the story pleased Master Ludwig amazingly.

He clapped me on the shoulder again and again, chuckling meanwhile to himself as if he had heard something most comical, and seemingly forgetting for the time the peril which surrounded us.

As a matter of fact, he need have had no concern for young Chris, who was most likely at that moment safe at Valley Forge. But it seemed to me in my fearsome trouble, that he should have taken into account that Jeremy was a prisoner with the awful charge of being a spy hanging over him, while I must flee for my life, for if peradventure the Britishers knew I was concerned in this last matter, or if I was one of the two who entered the Jolly Tar inn the night previous, then would my mother's house be searched without loss of time.

As this idea came into my mind I started up feverishly, crying out, with little heed as to who might hear me:

"I must make every effort to leave the city, and at once! There is no safety for me now save with our army!"

"Sit ye down, lad," Master Ludwig said kindly, as he forced me back upon the makeshift for a bed which I had arranged. "It is certain the lobster-backs have not mixed you up in this business, else would your mother's house have been searched long ere this. I grant you there is but one course, and that to join our forces at Valley Forge; but let us consider how it may best be brought about, for I warrant you agree with me that it is not exactly safe for you to walk boldly through the streets of the town."

"But I dare not wait until nightfall!" I cried, and now so great was my fear that most like I acted as if having lost all my wits.

Young Chris's father took me by the hand, as he said in a most kindly tone:

"I would not ask you, Richard Salter, to remain here a single moment if I did not believe it to be for

the best. When I heard that Master Targe had been arrested, the fear in my mind was that everything had been discovered by the enemy. Now, however, I am inclined to believe it was a matter of accident — that you two lads were seen by some sneaking Tory to enter the house, and the innkeeper taken into custody on suspicion, else would the lobster-backs have been here in Drinker's alley long since."

"But even though all this be true, it stands me in hand to leave the city as soon as may be, if for no other purpose than that I may warn the Weaver of Germantown," I cried. "It was his purpose to come into Philadelphia soon — I believe within the next four and twenty hours, and unless he can be told of what has taken place, then is he certain to go directly to the Jolly Tar. Having done so, he will be made a prisoner on the moment, for it stands to reason the lobster-backs are watching that place, holding it open as they would a trap, for those who have been in the custom of visiting Master Targe."

"I understand full well, Richard Salter, that you must not only leave the city as soon as may be, but also get word to Valley Forge. Before you make the attempt, however, I will go out around the town with my ears open, and hear what is said on the streets. Wait patiently until my return, for I promise not to be away above an hour."

As a matter of course I could do no less than Master Ludwig suggested, for surely a difference of sixty minutes in the time of my departure would neither make nor mar the effort to escape.

Young Chris's father went straightway out into the street, my mother coming into the loft as soon as he had gone and taking me in her arms as if I

was once more a baby, rocked herself to and fro as she pressed me tightly to her breast, much as though believing my last hour on this earth was near at hand.

So great was her grief and so vivid her terror, that I longed most ardently for the return of the baker that I might set off without loss of time. Action, however dangerous, was far preferable to remaining there witnessing the dear woman's grief and hearing her forebodings in my behalf.

I dare say young Chris's father returned speedily, although it seemed to me he had been gone a full half-day. On returning, instead of knocking at the kitchen door to warn us of his coming, he entered without ceremony, making his way directly to the loft, and saying as soon as he was there:

"I believe, Richard, that you had best make the venture now. I have visited all the coffee-houses where the lobster-backs most do congregate, and failed to hear anything to cause great alarm. It is true that you and Jeremy Hapgood were seen to enter the Jolly Tar inn at a late hour last night, or, perhaps I should say, at an early hour this morning, and the fact that the door was opened immediately you arrived, showed the watcher, whoever he might be, that your coming was expected. Therefore it was reasonable to suppose you were engaged in some business which was unlawful in the sight of the king's soldiers."

"And they know no more than that Jeremy and I visited the tavern this morning?" I cried, feeling as if a great burden had been rolled from my shoulders.

"Ay, lad, that seems to be the substance of it; but from what I heard here and there, it appears

that the lobster-backs have an idea they may be able to get more information, if peradventure they can find the second boy, meaning you. It is evident that neither Master Targe nor Jeremy Hapgood have thus far been induced to tell who you are, and the chances for your getting away just now seem to me better than if you waited until the thick-headed Britishers have come to suspect that perhaps the son of Mistress Salter, who has before been detected in treasonable acts, might have been Jeremy's companion."

It can well be understood that after such advice as this I did not linger in my mother's house. I was as eager to begin the venture as Master Ludwig was to have me go, and, kissing my mother fervently, I went down the narrow stairway into the kitchen, wondering whether I would ever be able to return.

Before I could unlatch the door my mother was close by my side, insisting that I stop sufficiently long for her to fill my pockets with food, and I could do no less than allow her such poor comfort.

Young Chris's father had come from the loft before I was again ready to set off, and, shaking me heartily by the hand, bade me tell his son to remain at Valley Forge, or wheresoever the American army might be, until the Britishers had left Philadelphia.

"They are to leave, Richard. They are soon to evacuate this city even though our people do not raise a hand against them, for by this time they have begun to understand that no good can come of remaining here in idleness. You boys are to be cautious. Do not force yourselves to the front when a service of peril is to be performed; but, also, do

not shirk danger if so be you are called upon to meet it."

Then I was in the alley, walking rapidly and yet striving not to appear in a hurry; having a certain sense of relief because I was in the open air and could no longer see the grief of my mother, and fancying that every shadow was a lobster-back who had been sent to take me in custody.

I walked directly across the city without being molested in any way. Those whom I passed, and you may be certain I did not allow any to come near me if so be there was an alleyway in which to hide myself, gave no more heed than if I had been a homeless dog.

Having gotten beyond where the houses were set thickly together, I began to believe that all danger was over — that I had once more come out from among the lobster-backs without harm. There was a song of thanksgiving in my heart, and I burned to cry aloud in my joy, when suddenly, as I passed an outbuilding near by Isaac Norris's storehouse, not dreaming there was anyone in the vicinity, a man stepped out from behind it, and, suddenly catching me by the coat collar viciously, drew me quickly back within the shadow of the trees.

Wriggling to the best of my strength, I contrived to look up into the man's face, and then did my heart grow heavy as lead in my breast, for he who held me so securely was none other than Master Baker, Skinny's father!

Then did I say to myself that now verily was I much the same as in the custody of the Britishers, for this venomous Tory, knowing something of what I had already done to his son, and most like guessing a portion of the rest, would not allow the grass to

grow under his feet, until he had turned me over to the lobster-backs as a dangerous spy.

During a full half-minute I gazed at him and he at me, the one most likely speculating as to how he could best avenge the injury done his son, and the other, as I know full well, wondering whether, with such a charge as Master Baker could make against him, he would be able to remain long away from the gallows.

"Do you know where my son is, Richard Salter?" Skinny's father asked sharply as he shook me vigorously by the coat collar, and, without stopping to reflect upon what might be the result of such an answer; but counting only on giving proof that I was not so chicken-hearted as his cur of a boy, I replied without hesitation:

"Ay, Master Baker, he is most like in Valley Forge, at least, he was headed that way when last I saw him."

"So then you have been concerned again in treasonable acts against the king?" the man snarled, and although my peril was great, it pleased me wondrously that I could thus aggravate him.

"How long since has it been an act against the king to serve Skinny out as he deserves?" I cried mockingly. "Verily his majesty will be kept busy if he concerns himself with those who would give your son that which he has earned."

"It is not well for you to be so flippant, Richard Salter, for now is it in my power to send you to prison, and from there, mayhap, to the gallows."

"I grant you all that, Master Baker," I replied, and was even myself astonished because the fear which previously beset me had now passed away, leaving my mind as free from care as if there had never

been such a person in all the world as Skinny Baker's father, or his majesty of England. "I grant you all that, and if so be it is brought about, then may you count to a certainty your son will be served the same dose, for I guarantee he will be closely guarded until I am once more at Valley Forge to show that I have come through this city in safety. What happens to me here, will happen to Skinny at Valley Forge, make no mistake regarding that, Master Baker."

It was a threat uttered at random; an idea which had come into my mind on the spur of the moment, and yet it told as if the words were true as Holy Writ.

Master Baker half staggered back while his face paled, and I understood he fully believed all I had told him, for indeed it would not have been strange had we lads agreed with the Weaver of Germantown that Skinny should be held as hostage for the safe return of Jeremy and me.

In fact, if we had not been thick-headed, we might have hit upon some such plan; but even though we had not, the threat which I thus made at random served nearly as good a purpose as if it had been the truth.

Master Baker shook me violently, as if he would thus relieve his feelings and perhaps force a different story from my lips, and when he was done with such exercise, I, looking him full in the face, asked tauntingly:

"Well, why do you not take me to General Howe's headquarters, and repeat that which I have just told you?"

"Did my son know that whatsoever was done to you here in Philadelphia would be meted out to

him?" Master Baker asked after a brief pause, and I replied without hesitation, as if it was a well-known fact:

"Ay, he must have, else had he lost his ears. I dare say it will please him greatly to know that whatsoever comes to him is due to the act of his father."

If I had struck Master Baker full in the face he could not have shrunk back more quickly, or given evidence of keener pain, and I fancied his grip on my collar was slightly relaxed.

Like a flash of light came to me the idea that it might yet be possible to escape from Skinny's father, and, exerting all my strength, I wheeled about even as he held me firmly, lowering my head and butting him full in the pit of the stomach with such force that he was thrown against the side of the building with a thud that caused him to grunt like a pig.

You can well fancy that I did not lose a single second before setting off in flight.

Whether it was that I had dealt the man such a blow as to render him incapable of pursuit, or if he hesitated to raise the hue and cry against me because of that fate which might come to his son, I cannot say; but certain it is that within two minutes after having delivered the blow, I was running behind the ropewalk toward the river a good two squares away from Skinny's father, while never a sound could I hear from the rear.

It seemed hardly possible, when Master Baker had his grip on my coat collar, that I could escape, for the venomous Tory was bent on gaining revenge because of what had been done to his son.

BUTTING HIM FULL IN THE PIT OF THE STOMACH.

Yet I had given him the slip, although it could not have been done but for the fact that he, like Skinny, was a coward, and when I had made up that story which shall not be set down against me as a lie, because my life was trembling in the balance, he was not brave enough to say that his son should bear, for the good of the king, what might come to him.

Instead of showing himself a man, he was so far overcome by my words, together with the blow which I gave him in the stomach, as to literally be reduced to helplessness.

However, now that I was free it might be only for the moment, and I had no reason for loitering anywhere in the vicinity of Philadelphia, therefore set off stoutly, yet not rapidly because of the necessity of keeping a sharp look-out ahead.

To run into a squad of lobster-backs just at this time would have been much the same as if Master Baker had taken me to headquarters, and however good an excuse I might have presented for being in that vicinity, I knew full well it would not be received by whosoever came across me.

It was certain now, after all which had happened, that anyone caught while seemingly making an attempt to leave the city, would be forced to give a mighty strict account of himself.

Therefore it was I kept on steadily but slowly, until when, as nearly as I could say, it was nigh to noon, I saw in the distance, and coming toward me, a figure which looked strangely familiar, yet I dared not risk the chance of being seen.

Taking advantage of the first clump of bushes which grew near at hand, I hid myself in a clumsy

fashion and waited mayhap ten minutes, when I saw that he from whom I had thus screened myself was none other than Timothy Bowers.

One can well fancy the joy which came into my heart when I sprang out of the hiding place, startling Timothy nearly into shrieking, and we two lads, clasping hands, went back amid the thicket where we could talk without danger of being seen.

I was eager first to know why he had left Valley Forge when there was so little he could do in Philadelphia, and so much of danger to be encountered; but straightway learned that so far no information had been taken to the American camp of Master Targe's arrest, and indeed, had I given the matter proper consideration, I would have understood that there had not been time for any friend of the Cause, however zealous, to have gained the American army.

Timothy had been sent by the Weaver of Germantown with a message to the innkeeper, which was to the effect that he should meet the Weaver among the ruined buildings of Germantown on the following morning; but for what purpose, as a matter of course, the lad did not know.

Then it was I told my comrade of all which had occurred in the city, and his face grew pale because of the danger to which I had been exposed, though I dare venture to say he gave not a single thought to the possibility that he himself was in the greater peril because of Master Targe's having been taken into custody.

Of course there was now no reason for Timothy to continue on. He could not come upon the innkeeper save he was carried into prison under arrest, and it appeared to both of us as of the highest con-

sequence that information concerning the trouble be taken to Valley Forge without delay.

Having arrived at this decision we set off at once, and had walked well-nigh to two miles before realizing that if the Weaver of Germantown kept the appointment he would have supposed to be made with Master Targe, then might we pass him in the night, for it was reasonable to believe he would leave Valley Forge before sunset.

Therefore I said to Timothy that we might save ourselves both labor and time by halting at Germantown, and waiting there for the coming of the man who was doing so much, as a spy, in aid of the Cause.

When we had decided that this would be the proper course, then came the thought that we might not be able to find the Weaver, because it was likely he had some hiding place there, and we could come upon him only by merest chance.

However, it seemed necessary we should strive to get this chance, since there was but little question that if we kept on to Valley Forge during the hours of darkness we would be likely to pass him on the road, and thus he be allowed to run into danger without knowing what awaited him since the arrest of Master Targe.

In this case fortune favoured us Minute Boys as it seemed she had since the first day we agreed to do whatsoever we might in behalf of the Cause.

We were hardly more than come to Germantown, and were roaming around amid the half-burned buildings trying to decide where we would seek a shelter, when we came full upon the man we were seeking.

It appeared, as we learned afterward, that he had

been securely hidden in a snug place well-known to himself, and saw us approach that building where we were so nearly burned to death, therefore came out to greet us.

In the fewest words possible, I told him of all that had happened in Philadelphia since I arrived there.

To my great surprise he did not appear deeply concerned regarding the matter. I had supposed he would at least show some signs of grief because Master Targe was in peril of his life, and instead he said quietly and in a matter-of-fact tone:

"Then we must make the move so much the sooner, and depend upon others for information."

As a matter of course, I supposed he meant that it would be necessary to depend upon someone for further information from Philadelphia, therefore was more than astonished when he said, as if fancying we understood the entire situation:

"There is no longer any reason why we linger here. I had best retrace my steps, and you shall come with me. Although the British are not overly fond of loitering around the ruins which they themselves have made, it will be better if we put a greater distance between them and us."

"Meaning that you will go where, sir?" Timothy asked, and the Weaver of Germantown replied as if surprised because such a question was necessary:

"To Valley Forge, as a matter of course. There we will make our preparations for the next step, and the work cannot be pushed forward any too quickly, for, unless all signs fail us, General Clinton will make a movement of some kind right speedily."

"General Clinton, sir?" I asked.

"Ay, lad. Do you not know that he has taken over the command of the British forces in Philadelphia?"

I had heard somewhat of the kind, and yet gave no particular heed to the fact. It mattered little to us rebels, as I believed, who held command of the lobster-backs, so that it was one of the king's officers who would do whatsoever he might toward working us an injury.

Without waiting for further conversation the Weaver of Germantown set off at a rapid pace in the direction of Valley Forge, and we lads followed perforce, since there was nothing else for us except to seek refuge with those who would do what they might toward saving us from the enemy.

By this time I was beginning to know thoroughly well the trail between the headquarters of the American army, and our captive city of Philadelphia. It was to me as if I had spent half a lifetime doing nothing more than walking to and fro between these two points, and now I followed my leader in a listless manner.

It seemed to me that I no longer had any part or parcel in this work of aiding the colonies, for surely I could not venture into the city again without being taken into custody, and therefore had my time of usefulness as a spy come to an end.

If we Minute Boys were to continue striving to do something in behalf of our distressed country, then must we enlist as soldiers, despite the fact that we were not of the required age, and I welcomed such a possibility, for the trade of a spy was not pleasing to me.

I felt that it would be much more manly to stand

up bravely as a soldier, face to face with the enemy, rather than sneaking here and there under cover of darkness, hiding at the approach of either friend or foe, even though by such work I succeeded in doing somewhat of consequence in behalf of those who were struggling to win for us our freedom.

"If all things go well, we will leave camp again early to-morrow morning," the Weaver of Germantown suddenly said after we had travelled mayhap a couple of miles, and I asked in amazement:

"If we are to leave the camp so soon, sir, why do we go there at all?"

"Because it is not to be expected we can do this work single-handed. Already have I been promised a squad of forty men, and with them I dare venture to say we can accomplish our purpose."

I was more in the dark than before, and that Timothy was also blinded I understood when he asked impatiently:

"What may be our purpose?"

"To rescue those of our people who have been taken prisoners," was the reply.

"Do you count, sir, on making an attack upon Philadelphia with forty men?" I cried in bewilderment, whereupon the Weaver of Germantown laughed as he replied:

"If all the information which has been gained be correct, there will be no need of our making an attack on Philadelphia if so be we would release our friends who are in custody. There can be no question whatsoever but that General Clinton counts on evacuating the city within a very short time, and he will endeavour to do so before our people can get word as to his movements. Already, it is said, he has begun sending the heaviest of his baggage across

the river, and yesterday word was brought that orders had been given Cunningham to forward such prisoners as had not yet had a trial, with the next baggage-train that started out. Now it stands to reason such time will come speedily, and I am counting on giving the lobster-backs who accompany it the surprise of their lives."

"With forty men, sir?" Timothy asked quickly, and the Weaver of Germantown looked at the lad indulgently as he replied:

"More cannot well be spared. If the business is not to be done with forty, then I question whether two hundred would accomplish it, and it were better the smaller number sacrificed their lives, than the larger."

"How many men, sir, do you count would be sent to guard a baggage-train?" Timothy asked thoughtfully.

"Mayhap an hundred. I question if very many more, for the teamsters could be counted on to take a hand in the defence of the goods if so be the train was attacked."

"And with the teamsters the force would amount to more than an hundred," Timothy said as if speaking to himself, whereupon the Weaver of Germantown replied cheerily:

"Make it in round numbers an hundred fifty, and we count on reducing that strength very considerably by giving them a surprise."

"Shall you carry out such a plan, sir, before knowing absolutely whether the prisoners are with the baggage-train or not?" I asked, and the reply came sharply, in token that I should have had better sense than to raise such a question:

"We shall know before the train starts whether

our people will accompany it or not, even though the Minute Boys of Philadelphia are laid off from duty temporarily," he added with a smile. "We still have friends in the city who can get information as to what may be going on."

After this reply, which was much like a reproof, I held my peace, and we three trudged on toward Valley Forge, I saying again and again to myself that verily were we rebels come to desperate straits when we counted on attacking a force of an hundred fifty men with only forty, and figuring meanwhile that it were better only so small a number should be killed, much as if their destruction were almost certain.

Only a few moments previous I had been saying to myself that it would be nobler for us lads to act as soldiers, being regularly enrolled in the army, and stand face to face with the enemy, rather than playing the spy, and yet, now that there was in the near future an action in which I might take part, my heart grew timorous.

The odds seemed so great, even though we might surprise this train, that I felt confident the scheme could not succeed; but believed all who had part in it must meet with death.

Then again, there were many chances against our rescuing the prisoners even though we held our own with those who guarded the train.

It might be possible a squad of forty men could surprise and drive back an hundred fifty; but to so disable that number as to be able to go into their very midst and take out prisoners, who would unquestionably be closely guarded, was a proposition which seemed to me so wild as to be almost ridiculous.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ATTACK

AND now because I am come so nearly to the time when I must cease setting down what we lads did — cease because we no longer hold ourselves as Minute Boys, but have become full-fledged soldiers in the American army,— it is necessary I hasten over events upon which I would dearly love to linger, for there is to me a world of satisfaction in going once more over those times when we put the lobster-backs to confusion, even though they outnumbered us three or four to one.

The Weaver of Germantown lost no time on the journey. He increased his pace as the moments wore on, showing that he was in haste to set about the plan which he had in mind, and there were moments when we lads were literally forced to run in order to hold our own with him.

It was night when we arrived at Valley Forge, and his first care was to lead us to that hut where our comrades were sleeping, after which he took his leave, and we saw no more of him until the following morning.

There is little need for me to say that young Chris and Sam were thoroughly astonished when we awakened them, for both believed we were lying at the Jolly Tar inn secure from all danger.

In my turn I was surprised because of failing to see anything of Skinny, and the first question I asked was concerning him.

Then young Chris told us that the prisoner had been taken from them and was confined in the guard-house as a spy, although it was hardly probable such charge would hold against him if he should be brought to trial.

Believing he would not be wholly safe in the custody of the Minute Boys, and knowing that it would be in his power to carry much valuable information to the lobster-backs if he succeeded in making his escape, the leaders of the army had taken charge of him, and, as Sam said, we were well rid of the sneaking cur.

Both the lads were filled with fear and apprehension when I told them of what had taken place in the city, and you may well fancy that we were not inclined to close our eyes in slumber during all that night, for we speculated vainly as to what would be the result in case the Weaver of Germantown carried out his bold plans.

Although we had had good proof of what our people could do, there was never one of us who believed that an attack upon a baggage-train guarded by at least an hundred lobster-backs, when our force was to number only forty, could succeed, and before the morning came we, in our ignorance and lack of faith, had set it down as a fact that those who went out with the hope of releasing our people from the hands of the Britishers, would come back to us no more in this world.

It was yet reasonably early in the forenoon when the Weaver of Germantown came to the hut where, having breakfasted, we were sitting idly together discussing this possibility or that as if we were old and well versed in warfare.

"If you lads are minded to come with me, then

will I show you that which will warm your hearts in the years to come, when you look back upon it," the Weaver said, and I asked if his men were ready for the venture.

"We shall set off within the hour," he replied; "but you need not consider it your duty to come with us. I am free to confess that there must of necessity be much of danger in the enterprise, and perhaps it would be well if you boys were to remain here until the work has been done, or we have failed."

He could have said nothing else which would have aroused us so thoroughly as did this intimation that we might be afraid to go with the soldiers, or would be willing to remain at Valley Forge simply because we might otherwise come to grief.

I was not alone when I said stoutly, although there was a sinking at my heart which I could not prevent, that I for one would follow him, and my comrades were equally determined.

All the preparations had been made, as we learned a few moments later, and it was only necessary for us to fall in line at the rear of the squad.

Then was begun the march, we heading straightaway for the Delaware, counting to cross that river and lie in hiding somewhere nearabout Camden until the baggage-train should have crossed.

All this we did and without adventure, because of the caution which was exercised by our leader, who, as a matter of course, was the Weaver of Germantown himself. He, knowing thoroughly well all the country roundabout, led us at the expense of many a weary mile far out of all possible danger of encountering the enemy, and to a point on the river where were boats ready to carry us across,

thus showing that he had made his preparations for this venture some time before.

During that day and all the night we marched, save while crossing the river, or when we halted five or ten minutes at a time, and when finally he gave the word that we were come to our journey's end, we Minute Boys were so nearly exhausted that we flung ourselves down wheresoever we chanced to be and speedily fell asleep, not awakening again until the word had been passed from man to man that the moment for action was near at hand.

It appeared, so we learned later, that if our departure from Valley Forge had been postponed no more than six hours, then would we have come too late to effect that for which we hoped.

The baggage-train had already been sent across the river near to Gloucester Point, and within two hours after we had come to the end of our march and were bivouacked in the thicket, the Britishers set off, counting to gain New York without interference from our people, because their movements had been shrouded with so much of secrecy.

Exactly what took place from the time we were awakened until a veritable battle was begun, I can say very little, because of knowing comparatively nothing.

There was much moving to and fro among our squad, and frequent whispered consultations with the Weaver of Germantown as we marched up the road to where an ambush was to be formed; but we lads knew nothing whatsoever concerning the purport of this talk.

We only understood that an action was near at hand when we were posted on either side the road in two companies of twenty each, and then it was

we had evidence of the thoughtfulness of this Weaver of Germantown, for he brought to each of us lads a musket and ammunition, saying that we were to obey orders so far as firing and re-loading were concerned, the same as would the men.

When I asked how it was we had not been armed before leaving Valley Forge, he replied that the march before us he knew to be a hard one, and, fearing lest we might fall by the wayside with fatigue, had had these weapons carried by some of the men to spare us so much of labour.

If anything had been needed to hearten us in the work to be performed, this evidence of his kindliness would have been sufficient.

When he had ceased speaking all the timorousness was fled from my heart, and, lad though I was, I felt myself capable of holding my own against half a dozen lobster-backs, although I dare venture to say I would have cut a sorry figure even if opposed to no more than two.

It was about seven o'clock in the morning when we concealed ourselves in ambush along the road. Two hours later I could see, through the foliage, the advance of a long train, consisting of no less than twelve heavily-laden wagons each drawn by four horses, and preceded by a party of men in red uniforms to the number of perhaps fifty.

Then as the train advanced, I saw an equal force in the rear of the wagons, and understood that the Weaver of Germantown had not been misinformed when he was told that a guard of near about an hundred would be sent out.

In addition to these soldiers who marched, there were two men on the seat of each wagon, therefore, as I hurriedly estimated the force, we would

oppose ourselves to no less than an hundred twenty — perhaps a dozen more.

Although I had felt so bold when the Weaver of Germantown put the weapon into my hands, now it was that my heart thumped until it surely seemed that those who were advancing would be alarmed by the noise, and my tongue had suddenly grown dry as I tried in vain to moisten my lips.

Fortunately for me, however, we had but little time, after the first appearance of the train, before the work was begun.

In my ignorance I had believed that the full number of wagons would be allowed to go by, and we fall upon the rear guard, where I fancied were the prisoners, if so be there were any with the train. Instead of which, when the first of the lobster-backs were opposite our place of hiding the word was passed from man to man, that when the Weaver of Germantown sprang out into the open we were to discharge our weapons, having due regard to aim.

Then, before I could have counted ten, this man who had played the spy in Philadelphia, came out from amid the foliage as if courting death, and shouting to us who were concealed to take good care that every bullet found its billet.

At the same instant, even before the lobster-backs fully understood what the Weaver of Germantown was saying, came the order to open fire.

Strange as it may seem, I have no knowledge whatsoever concerning that action, save such as was told me later. It seemed as if with the report of the muskets I lost all consciousness of self. I suddenly became one who thirsted for blood, and had

forgotten that death might be dealt by those who were in front of me.

There is in my mind a dim recollection that I loaded and fired, re-loaded and fired again, continuing to do so until the barrel of my musket became heated, and once I believed I heard someone say that the rear guard had come up — that the prisoners were being driven back by the teamsters.

I knew the horses were plunging about; that there were what looked to be blotches of red on the dusty earth, yet hardly understood that those crimson stains upon the yellow road was the life blood of the poor wretches who had come from overseas, without personal reason, to whip us colonists into subjection.

I was in a fever; consumed by the desire to add to those red, sprawling figures that lay stretched out in the dust.

My mouth was dry; everything swam before me; the trees opposite seemed to dance, and to have taken on a reddish hue, while before my eyes as I loaded the musket, it appeared as if both powder and ball had suddenly become scarlet.

The hue of blood was everywhere; the thirst to kill was overwhelming, and during such time as the action continued I was literally insane.

Then came the time when one of our men seized the musket from my hands, saying angrily as he flung me back toward the trees, that I should control myself better than to fire upon those who had surrendered.

Whereupon I dully asked if the engagement was over, and someone from a distance, as it seemed to me, replied with a cheer:

"Ay, lad, over, and with the lobster-backs surrendering like chickens crowding around a dough-trough!"

"And the prisoners?" I cried, now suddenly coming to my senses, and realizing for what purpose we had spilled so much of human blood as I could see before me.

"Look yonder!" Timothy Bowers shouted, and only then did I know that he had been by my side during all the fight; but in after days, when I questioned him concerning it, he could tell me no more than I myself knew.

Having become once more Richard Salter, instead of the crazy lad who was doing his part as a soldier unconsciously, I ran to the rear where was a throng of wretched looking men bound by the hands to a long rope extending from the rear of one of the wagons; but before I got there the Weaver of Germantown, who was just ahead of me, had cut the foremost loose from their bonds, and I clasped Jeremy by the neck, so overjoyed as not really to be able to utter the words that were in my mind.

There was good reason why we should rejoice, for had we not beaten the lobster-backs when they outnumbered us exactly three to one?

Yet there was no time for us to spend in words, since who could say that the noise of the attack might not have been heard by the enemy at Camden, and if we would save our skins after having won such a victory, then was it necessary to get away from there without delay.

It had been the purpose of the Weaver of Germantown not only to release the prisoners; but to capture the train for the benefit of the Continental

army, and therefore it was we took up the line of march immediately, the British teamsters obeying the Weaver's orders for the very good reason that they dared not do otherwise.

We had won a great victory, but in the doing of it had lost five of our men who were killed outright, and four others badly wounded.

Singularly enough, none of us lads had been injured, although, as we were told afterward, we had conducted ourselves bravely. In fact, the Weaver himself said we had won the right to be called soldiers, and that it should be his care to see we were given an opportunity to enlist.

Now, if you can believe me, we had not only set free Master Targe and Jeremy; but nine others beside, all of whom were to have been tried for various acts of so-called treason when General Clinton had got his army to some safer point than he believed was to be found in Philadelphia.

In addition to this, after four days of hard work we actually entered Valley Forge with the same heavy baggage-train of General Clinton's, which had been sent away from Philadelphia early so there might be no possibility of its falling into our hands.

We well-nigh came to grief while crossing the Delaware in boats which were not large enough to freight the wagons safely; but by dint of transferring the cargoes, or, in other words, making two trips for each load, we succeeded in gaining the Pennsylvania shore safe and sound.

It seemed to me that we were hardly more than in camp and rested from our exertions, when came the news that General Clinton had actually begun the evacuation of Philadelphia, and then there was

so much of seeming confusion that one found it hard to keep his wits about him.

It was General Washington's purpose to follow the lobster-backs on their march to New York, and no time was to be lost in setting out after we learned that the Britishers were really on the road.

Then was the time when the Weaver of Germantown found opportunity to fulfil his promise to us, and we lads, who a few weeks before had agreed to call ourselves Minute Boys of Philadelphia, were allowed to sign the rolls in due form and become soldiers of the Continental army, being admitted to the ranks by order of the commander-in-chief himself, whose permission was necessary because we were not yet come to the age of men.

Thus it was that we lads who had done some little work for the Cause, were allowed to stand shoulder to shoulder during that battle at Monmouth, when General Clinton and his swaggering British officers came to know full well of what stuff our rag-tag and bobtail of an army was made.

It was after this battle, when we were ministering to the wounds of the Weaver of Germantown, who had stood in the ranks all the day fighting most valiantly, that we learned why he had never called himself by any given name during such time as we had known him.

It was because he belonged to the sect called Friends, who, as you know, are opposed to fighting, and many of whom were unfriendly to the Cause. Were I to write his name, which we learned there on that bloody ground, then you would know that not only he, but those nearest and dearest to him, regardless of the fact that their faith bound

them to shun warfare, had done very much to aid the colonies in their struggle against the king.

It was the Weaver himself, in later days, who told us lads, that although the work which we did in Philadelphia might not have seemed of great value, he believed the commander-in-chief would ever remember what had been done by the Minute Boys of Philadelphia.

THE END

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